

## Connecticut Debate Association

January 7, 2025

### New Canaan High School and Warde High School

---

#### THBT the US should not defend Taiwan militarily.

---

#### The US must avoid war with China over Taiwan at all costs

The Guardian, Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis (ret.), Tue 5 Oct 2021

The prevailing mood among Washington insiders is to fight if China attempts to conquer Taiwan. That would be a mistake. Since last Friday, the People's Republic of China has launched a total of 155 warplanes – the most ever over four consecutive days – into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone; Ned Price said the state department was "very concerned". There have been more than 500 such flights through nine months this year, as opposed to 300 all of last year.

Before war comes to the Indo-Pacific and Washington faces pressure to fight a potentially existential war, American policymakers must face the cold, hard reality that fighting China over Taiwan risks an almost-certain military defeat – and gambles we won't stumble into a nuclear war.

Bluntly put, America should refuse to be drawn into a no-win war with Beijing. It needs to be said up front: there would be no palatable choice for Washington if China finally makes good on its decades-long threat to take Taiwan by force. Either choose a bad, bitter-tasting outcome or a self-destructive one in which our existence is put at risk.

The prevailing mood in Washington among officials and opinion leaders is to fight if China attempts to conquer Taiwan by force. In a speech at the Center for Strategic Studies last Friday, the deputy secretary of defense, Kathleen Hicks, said that if Beijing invades Taiwan, "we have a significant amount of capability forward in the region to tamp down any such potential". Either Hicks is unaware of how little wartime capacity we actually have forward deployed in the Indo-Pacific or she's unaware of how significant China's capacity is off its shores, but whichever the case, we are in no way guaranteed to "tamp down" a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Earlier this year, Senator Rick Scott and Representative Guy Reschenthaler introduced the Taiwan Invasion Prevention Act which, Representative Reschenthaler said, would authorize "the president to use military force to defend Taiwan against a direct attack". In the event of an actual attack, there would be enormous pressure to fast-track such a bill to authorize Biden to act. We must resist this temptation.

As I have previously detailed, there is no rational scenario in which the United States could end up in a better, more secure place after a war with China. The best that could be hoped for would be a pyrrhic victory in which we are saddled with becoming the permanent defense force for Taiwan (costing us hundreds of billions a year and the equally permanent requirement to be ready for the inevitable Chinese counter-attack).

The most likely outcome would be a conventional defeat of our forces in which China ultimately succeeds, despite our intervention – at the cost of large numbers of our jets being shot down, ships being sunk, and thousands of our service personnel killed. But the worst case is a conventional war spirals out of control and escalates into a nuclear exchange. That leaves as the best option something most Americans find unsatisfying: refuse to engage in direct combat against China on behalf of Taiwan. Doing so will allow the United States to emerge on the other side of a China/Taiwan war with our global military and economic power intact.

It would take Beijing decades to overcome the losses incurred from a war to take Taiwan, even if Beijing triumphs. That's not to suggest we stand passively aside and let China run over Taiwan with impunity. The most effective course of action for Washington would be to condemn China in the strongest possible terms, lead a global movement that will enact crippling sanctions against Beijing, and make them an international pariah. China's pain wouldn't be limited to economics, however.

It would take Beijing decades to overcome the losses incurred from a war to take Taiwan, even if Beijing triumphs. The United States and our western allies, on the other hand, would remain at full military power, dominate the international business markets, and have the moral high ground to keep China hemmed in like nothing that presently exists. Xi would be seen as an unquestioned aggressor, even by other Asian regimes, and the fallout against China could knock them back decades. Our security would be vastly improved from what it is today – and incalculably higher than if we foolishly tried to fight a war with China.

Publicly, Washington should continue to embrace strategic ambiguity but privately convey to Taiwanese leaders that we will not fight a war with China. That would greatly incentivize Taipei to make whatever political moves and engage in any negotiation necessary to ensure the perpetuation of the status quo. The blunt, hard reality is that a Taiwan maintaining the status quo is far better than a smoldering wreck of an island conquered by Beijing.

The only way the US could have our security harmed would be to allow ourselves to be drawn into a war we're likely to lose over an issue peripheral to US security. In the event China takes Taiwan by force, Washington should stay out of the fray and lead a global effort to ostracize China, helping ensure our security will be strengthened for a generation to come.

Daniel L Davis is a senior fellow for defense priorities and a former lieutenant colonel in the US army who deployed into combat zones four times. He is the author of *The Eleventh Hour in 2020 America*

## Taiwan president warns of ‘catastrophic consequences’ if island falls to China

The Guardian, Helen Davidson in Taipei, Tue 5 Oct 2021

Tsai Ing-wen says Taiwan will ‘do whatever it takes to defend itself’ against an increasingly assertive Beijing. Taiwan is committed to defending its democracy against an increasingly aggressive China, the island’s president has vowed, warning of “catastrophic consequences” for the region should it fall.

The comments from Tsai Ing-wen, in an essay published on Tuesday, came amid record-breaking incursions by Chinese warplanes into its air defence zone. On Tuesday Taiwan’s premier, Su Tseng-chang, said the “over the top” activity violated regional peace, and Taiwan needed to be on alert.

China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has sent nearly 150 planes into Taiwan’s air defence identification (ADIZ) zone in the first four days of October, in what mainland figures and media have labeled a demonstration of strength but which world governments condemned as an act of intimidation and aggression.

Writing for Foreign Affairs magazine, Tsai stressed Taiwan’s desire for peace but said “if its democracy and way of life are threatened, Taiwan will do whatever it takes to defend itself”.

However she also urged other nations to “understand the value of working with Taiwan”, against the broader threat posed by Beijing. “And they should remember that if Taiwan were to fall, the consequences would be catastrophic for regional peace and the democratic alliance system.”

Beijing claims Taiwan as a province in China, and has pledged to take it, by force if necessary. It considers Tsai’s government to be separatists, but she has said Taiwan is already a sovereign nation with no need to declare independence, and has no wish for conflict.

“Amid almost daily intrusions by the People’s Liberation Army, our position on cross-strait relations remains constant: Taiwan will not bend to pressure, but nor will it turn adventurist, even when it accumulates support from the international community,” she said.

Few countries formally recognise Taiwan, a situation which Tsai said had compelled Taiwan to think asymmetrically, forming unofficial partnerships and agreements, and contributing to international bodies as a non-state party. With growing ties around the world, Taiwan was an increasingly important democracy, trading partner and global supplier, and a crucial segment of the first island chain, which stretches from northern Japan to Borneo, Tsai said.

“Should this line be broken by force, the consequences would disrupt international trade and destabilise the entire western Pacific,” she said. “In other words, a failure to defend Taiwan would not only be catastrophic for the Taiwanese; it would overturn a security architecture that has allowed for peace and extraordinary economic development in the region for seven decades.”

Analysts debate how imminent the threat is, but this week’s escalation of what had already grown to be near daily sorties, alarmed observers and prompted rebuke from various countries.

On Tuesday, Japan’s foreign minister, Toshiimitsu Motegi, said he hoped Taiwan and China were able to resolve the issues peacefully. He said Japan was weighing up possible scenarios in order to make its own preparations.

It followed comments from Australia’s government and the US state department urging Beijing to cease its threats or use of force. The White House also said it was in private communications through diplomatic channels, about China’s actions regarding Taiwan.

Taiwan’s foreign minister announced on Tuesday a group of French senators will visit the island this week.

Taiwan hopes to provide a deterrence to China through strong international ties and investment in its defence capabilities, including arms purchases through the US.

“Such initiatives are meant to maximise Taiwan’s self-reliance and preparedness and to signal that we are willing to bear our share of the burden and don’t take our security partners’ support for granted,” Tsai said.

Taiwan was “fully committed to collaborating with our neighbours to prevent armed conflict in the East China and South China Seas, as well as in the Taiwan Strait”.

---

## What Taiwan Really Wants

The New York Times, By Natasha Kassam, Oct. 29, 2021

It started with an innocuous question from a town hall audience: A student asked President Biden whether he would vow to protect Taiwan from China.

Mr. Biden’s response — a quick “yes,” then “yes” again when pressed by a CNN anchor — was instant breaking news globally. The White House almost immediately moved to walk back the comments.

The foreign policy kerfuffle was brief but underscored the high stakes when it comes to Taiwan.

Relations between China and Taiwan are at their worst point in decades. Military provocations are rising: Record numbers of Chinese warplanes have crossed into Taiwan’s air defense zone in recent weeks, a stark reminder of Beijing’s desire to absorb Taiwan.

Some U.S. lawmakers — in both parties, echoed by former officials and commentators — have been calling for Washington to commit to a firm security guarantee toward Taipei and ditch the longstanding U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity, or at least to seriously consider doing so, which leaves open the question of whether the United States would come to Taiwan’s aid in the event of an attack from China.

So when Mr. Biden unambiguously said the United States was committed to defending Taiwan, the White House quickly clarified there was “no change” in its policy.

Whether Biden simply misspoke or was signaling his resolve to China, the suggestion of a shift to strategic clarity prompted a cautious response from Taiwan: The president’s office cautioned Taiwan would not “rashly advance” when it receives support.

That should not come as a surprise. But lost in the Beltway rhetoric is the will of Taiwan’s people. Many outsiders — myself included — are weighing in on what should be done about Taiwan. Few appear to be listening to what Taiwan is actually saying.

I study public opinion and foreign policy, specializing in China and Taiwan, and have watched anxiety over the Taiwan Strait reach a fever pitch. Decades of polling and heated debate in Taiwan’s democracy offer insight into what Taiwan really wants. It is clear that almost all of Taiwan’s people do not want to unify with China. They want to continue living their lives as they see fit, under a democratically elected government.

In fact, most in Taiwan — 87 percent, according to a recent poll — want to maintain some form of the status quo.

The status quo means maintaining de facto independence but avoiding retaliation from China. And the percentage of Taiwan’s people who want to maintain the status quo indefinitely is growing. It is the best-case scenario in a sea of unenviable options.

To be sure, if there were no risk of invasion from China, the majority would choose independence.

But China’s President Xi Jinping has made clear that such a declaration is not available to Taiwan. So the status quo is pragmatic — and preferable.

Taipei’s responses to Beijing’s threats have been resolute, but the island nation has warned against unilateral changes to the status quo. Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen called for “maintaining” it in her recent National Day address, saying “we will do our utmost to prevent the status quo from being unilaterally altered.” While “status quo” for Taiwan is not a static idea, the broad contours of Chinese, U.S. and Taiwanese policy roughly define what has been acceptable as the status quo.

Taiwan can exist as an independent state, with its own elections, judiciary, currency and military. China doesn’t relinquish its claim to Taiwan, and other countries avoid recognizing Taiwan as a sovereign state, instead pursuing informal relations with it. The United States sells Taiwan arms for self-defense and does not clarify whether the United States will defend Taiwan if China invades. This serves to deter Beijing while not provoking it.

That works for Taiwan.

“Tsai has set the tone,” read a recent editorial in The Taipei Times. “There is no need for Taiwan to declare independence.”

Like Ms. Tsai, senior figures across parties in Taiwan are calling for international support while urging caution against escalation. Influential Taiwanese have been warning against warmongering and saber-rattling. That all helps explain why Mr. Biden’s remarks last week raised such alarm. A Beijing official warned that the United States should “be cautious with its words.”

A shift to strategic clarity from strategic ambiguity would likely be interpreted by China as a sign that Washington intends to support a formal declaration of Taiwanese independence. Then Mr. Xi could claim he had no choice but to act militarily. The lives of millions of Taiwan residents would be at stake.

To be clear, it is China’s aggression that is threatening lives in Taiwan. Increased aerial incursions are a challenge to the status quo.

In response, Taiwan’s leaders have stressed domestic resilience while asking partners to advocate on its behalf in international institutions. Rather than calling for an explicit mutual defense guarantee, Taipei is seeking further security cooperation, economic links and opportunities to join regional trade initiatives.

These moves are not an attempt to change the status quo but rather a response to China’s efforts to tip the balance. Taiwan’s requests are measured and moderate, designed to create more space for it to exist without crossing Beijing’s red lines.

The United States has an important role to play in communicating that China’s threats will not be tolerated without cost.

Closer Taiwan-U.S. relations can help to keep the peace and are supported by most people in Taiwan. Three-quarters of them want the United States to help Taiwan participate in international organizations like the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

Signals from Washington to Tokyo, Canberra and Seoul show Beijing that Taipei is not isolated. But the risk of miscalculation is high. In this fraught moment, the United States’ response must be to follow Taiwan’s lead.

Otherwise, the risk is that various nations will act with urgency to suit their own domestic settings — inching closer to a catastrophic war, without reference to Taiwan’s people, or viewing Taiwan as a problem to be solved, a flashpoint or the most dangerous place on earth, not a peaceful democracy of 24 million people.

Of course, if Beijing does take hostile action, all bets are off. Ms. Tsai’s moderate path would no longer be tenable, and Taipei would need to look to Washington for unambiguous support.

But this is unlikely to happen in the short term. U.S. and Taiwan defense officials agree that China could be several years away from having the capability to invade Taiwan.

Helping Taiwan requires understanding the history and political aspirations of the people of Taiwan. Yes, measured responses are needed to Beijing’s provocative actions. But those wanting to help should take their cues from the people they claim to defend.

Natasha Kassam (@natashakassam) is the director of public opinion and foreign policy at the Lowy Institute in Sydney and

a former Australian diplomat in Beijing.

---

## **War Over Taiwan Is the Last Thing a Slumping China Needs**

Bloomberg News, By Minxin Pei, September 14, 2023

Minxin Pei is professor of government at Claremont McKenna College and author of "The Sentinel State: Surveillance and the Survival of Dictatorship in China."

The country's dire economic challenges make a conflict in the near future less likely, not more.

President Joe Biden sparked headlines last weekend when he challenged the idea that China's current economic slowdown might encourage the regime to speed up plans for a takeover of Taiwan. His judgment flew in the face of much conventional wisdom. It's also correct.

Popular theories about how China, facing the prospect of prolonged stagnation, will be tempted to lash out may make intuitive sense. But they are based on thin empirical evidence and a misunderstanding of the strategic calculations of the Chinese Communist Party and its dominant leader, President Xi Jinping.

The most enduring misconception about dictatorships mired in severe economic difficulties is the "diversion" theory. Its chief claim is that autocrats on the verge of losing legitimacy because of their economic mismanagement have a strong incentive to launch a conflict to rally public support and stay in power.

As common as this thesis is in the popular imagination, it is hard to find historical cases to support it. Argentina's seizure of the Falkland Islands in April 1982 may be the only qualifying example.

At the time, Argentina was suffering a banking crisis and recession. The generals likely thought that seizing the islands, which the UK had claimed as colony since 1840, would give their regime a new lease on life. That bet went disastrously wrong. After UK forces defeated the Argentinians, the junta quickly disintegrated.

The Falklands War is the exception that proves the rule. Economically weakened dictatorships are unlikely to win a war, so starting one is often suicidal, especially against a stronger opponent.

The "diversion" theory also wrongly assumes that autocrats require public support to stay in power. In fact, faced with an economic crisis, a dictatorship has a reasonable chance of surviving as long as it retains the support of the military.

If, on the other hand, a regime sends the military into battle and loses, it is unlikely to survive. That is why few dictators want to gamble on dangerous adventures. Indeed, their preferred — and time-tested — approach to economic crises is to escalate repression at home, not to launch wars against neighbors.

A more persuasive theory, propounded most eloquently by my Bloomberg Opinion colleague Hal Brands and Michael Beckley in their 2022 book, "Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict With China," is the "peak China" thesis. It argues that rising nations become most dangerous when their power is peaking as China's is, since they can see they have a better chance of winning a war today than in the future.

The historical evidence for this thesis is mixed. The theory also overlooks the differential of power between potential belligerents. If a peaking power is significantly weaker than its opponent, as China remains vis-à-vis the US, its leaders probably know their odds of winning a war are poor, regardless of timing.

Moreover, it's not clear Chinese leaders believe their nation's power has peaked. To be sure, no Chinese leaders expect high growth in the future. Still, most remain optimistic that China will grow faster relative to the US and so further close the gap between them.

They may not be wrong. Demographic ageing, often touted as China's most serious obstacle to future growth, won't profoundly affect China until after 2030 when the country's median age is expected to reach 42.7 years (compared with 39.7 years for the US). In the short-to-medium term, unemployment, not a shortage of labor, will be China's primary economic challenge.

Most importantly, as an upper-middle-income economy, China's growth potential remains much higher than that of the US. The country's main problems aren't incurable weak fundamentals, but economic mismanagement and a brewing real estate crisis.

Nevertheless, we should not underestimate the risk of a conflict breaking out accidentally.

At the moment, Xi has an interest in maintaining high tensions with the US and its closest allies in East Asia, albeit well short of war. That could divert domestic attention to external foes, allowing Xi to lay the blame for China's difficulties on the economic cold war being waged by the US.

There is evidence that China is calculating this balance carefully, taking measures to avoid a direct — and likely unwinnable — conflict. While Xi has resisted Biden's entreaties to establish "guardrails" around their competition, for instance, China's more frequent and aggressive military exercises against Taiwan have nevertheless not yet led to a shooting incident. The Pentagon has also found no evidence that Xi has made a decision on when and whether to invade Taiwan.

This strategy of "tensions without war" is still quite dangerous, of course, especially if Beijing's rivals are on hair-trigger alert for potential aggression. Just because China may not want a conflict is no guarantee it will avoid one.

Minxin Pei is professor of government at Claremont McKenna College and author of "The Sentinel State: Surveillance and the Survival of Dictatorship in China."

---

## **US, Japan and Australia Can Aid Taiwan With Words, Not War**

Bloomberg News, By Hal Brands, July 17, 2023

Hal Brands is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist and the Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins

---

University's School of Advanced International Studies.

A public pact to guarantee peace across the Western Pacific could deter Beijing without violating the "one China" policy. The greatest weakness of America's position in the Indo-Pacific is the lack of a multilateral alliance for deterring aggression. One of the key opportunities for the US in the coming year is to start piecing such a framework together.

To be clear, the only country that can force the creation of an "Asian NATO" is China — if it engages in expansion so outrageous as to thrust the countries of the region together under US leadership. What Washington can do is exploit the backlash Chinese coercion is already causing to secure an explicit agreement that three crucial regional powers — Australia, Japan and the US — will all be in it together if war comes.

The danger of conflict is clearly rising: Just ask Xi Jinping. The Chinese president recently warned that his nation must prepare for "high winds, choppy waters and dangerous storms." His military is advertising its ability to blockade or invade Taiwan. As China produces ships and munitions at breakneck pace, it is hard not to worry that East Asia's age of peace is drawing to a close.

Yet war is not inevitable. Deterring China requires convincing it that any conflict will go long — that Beijing can't land a knockout blow within days — and that it will go big, drawing in countries across the region. Xi might use force if he thinks a "short, sharp war" can subdue Taiwan without exposing China to catastrophic damage. He'll hesitate to fight a sprawling, protracted war that could wreck China's economy, decimate its military and endanger his regime.

"Going long" is primarily the responsibility of Taipei and Washington. Taiwan will need the weapons and will to keep fighting; the US has to be able to withstand a first strike on its bases in the region and ensure it doesn't quickly run out of missiles and bombs. "Going big" is where Australia and Japan can help.

In the past year, Japan has made historic hikes to its defense budget while trying to turn its southwestern islands into strongpoints capable of containing Xi's navy. Public opinion polls, official statements, and the cramped geography of the Western Pacific indicate that Tokyo probably couldn't sit out a Chinese war against Taiwan.

Australia is making generational investments in nuclear-powered submarines as part of its AUKUS partnership with Washington and London. Northern Australia is becoming a critical staging point for American ships and planes. Flourishing defense ties with Tokyo are turning the larger relationship between Australia, Japan and the US into a powerful strategic triangle.

When I visited Australia last year, officials were speculating about a "three-plus-one" coalition for defending Taiwan — the "one" being Taiwan, the "three" being Washington, Canberra and Tokyo. But whispers rarely deter: This idea would be more powerful if it were made public.

This would have to be done carefully: The US, Japan and Australia all have "one China" policies that prevent them from recognizing Taiwan as an independent nation. All have deliberately left ambiguous what they would do if China attacked. Any official declaration, then, would help Taiwan but not explicitly be about Taiwan. It would simply state that an attack on any one of the three signatories would be an attack on all, and that the three countries would cooperate closely to counter any major breach of peace in the Western Pacific.

This would be the functional equivalent of a trilateral commitment to Taiwan, because China couldn't attack that island without rupturing the region's peace and — most likely — hitting US bases on Japanese soil. The statement might be issued at a special meeting of the three countries' foreign and defense ministers in the next year.

Skeptics will call this cheap talk — or, perhaps, needlessly antagonizing. But a trilateral pact on security in the Western Pacific would be less provocative, from Beijing's perspective, than an in-your-face US commitment to defend Taiwan. It would also be more meaningful, given that Xi probably assumes China would have to defeat Washington to conquer Taiwan, but may still hope to keep others out of the fight. And it wouldn't require new US treaty commitments, because Washington is already pledged to defend the other two parties to the pact. The major difference is that a trilateral pact would more formally pledge Japan and Australia to each other — beyond the joint strategic declaration they signed in 2022 — and to defend, in concert with Washington, the stability of the larger region they share.

This declaration would reduce the danger that China might initiate war on the belief an invasion would stay small and limited. It would dramatically advance the goal of turning America's many bilateral relationships into a denser regional web of constraints on Chinese power. And it would form the core of a loose multilateral agreement to resist aggression in the region, which other countries — perhaps Canada, the UK, South Korea or the Philippines — might one day join.

Washington, Tokyo and Canberra aren't close to doing this right now: It's more of a stretch goal for an emerging trilateral coalition. But two or three years ago, who would have predicted that Japan would soon be spending 2% of its GDP on defense? Or that Australia would be hosting Japanese troops on its soil? Or that countries throughout the region would be strengthening their defenses, and their ties with one another, to counter Beijing?

Things are happening quickly in an Indo-Pacific menaced by Chinese power. Australia, Japan and America need to think big and bold about how to deter a war none of them wishes to fight.

Hal Brands is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist and the Henry Kissinger Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies.

---

## **Taiwan-Invasion War Game by US Think Tank Sees China Quickly Flopping**

Bloomberg News, By Anthony Capaccio, January 9, 2023

DC think tank says US subs, aircraft would exact costly toll

But defending Taiwan would come at a 'high cost' to the US too

A hypothetical Chinese invasion of Taiwan "quickly founders" but exacts high costs on the island democracy and the US Navy, according to the results of an extensive set of war games released Monday by a Washington think tank.

Despite "massive Chinese bombardment, Taiwanese ground forces stream to the beachhead, where the invaders struggle to build up supplies and move inland" as "US submarines, bombers, and fighter aircraft, often reinforced by Japan Self-Defense Forces, rapidly cripple the Chinese amphibious fleet," in the "most likely" scenario, the Center for Strategic and International Studies concluded.

Retired US generals and Navy officers and former Pentagon officials participated in 24 rounds of the tabletop exercise. Participants hunched like chess players alongside analysts from CSIS, moving forces depicted as blue and red boxes and small wooden squares over maps of the Western Pacific and Taiwan.

China's strikes on Japanese bases and US surface ships "cannot change the result: Taiwan remains autonomous" but "there is one major assumption here: Taiwan must resist and not capitulate. If Taiwan surrenders before US forces can be brought to bear, the rest is futile" and "this defense comes at a high cost," CSIS said.

The US and Japan "lose dozens of ships, hundreds of aircraft, and thousands of service members" and "such losses would damage the US global position for many years," CSIS said in the report.

While Australia and South Korea are important in the broader competition with China and may play some role in the defense of Taiwan, "Japan is the linchpin. Without the use of US bases in Japan, US fighter/attack aircraft cannot effectively participate in the war," CSIS found.

Although Taiwan's military is "unbroken" by a Chinese invasion "it is severely degraded and left to defend a damaged economy on an island without electricity and basic services." China "also suffers heavily" as "its navy is in shambles, the core of its amphibious forces is broken, and tens of thousands of soldiers are prisoners of war," the war games suggest.

**Vulnerable Navy**

Another major finding: The US Navy surface fleet is "extremely vulnerable," with it "typically losing two carriers and 10 to 20 large surface combatants in game iterations," CSIS said.

Based on the wargame results, the US should "prioritize submarines and other undersea platforms," as those vessels "were able to enter the Chinese defensive zone and wreak havoc with the Chinese fleet, but numbers were inadequate," said CSIS.

**Hypersonics Caveat**  
The US should also "continue development and fielding of hypersonic weapons but recognize that they are niche weapons" and "their high cost limits inventories, so they lack the volume needed to counter the immense numbers of Chinese air and naval platforms," CSIS said.

---

## **It'll Take More than American Military Might to Shore Up Taiwan**

The Wall Street Journal, By John Bolton, Oct. 20, 2021

Team Biden needs a fuller strategy that includes international recognition and new regional alliances.

China's threat to Taiwan is real, not hypothetical, as recent incursions into the island's air-defense zone demonstrate. To counter Beijing's renewed belligerence, a successful strategy must go beyond eliminating the "strategic ambiguity" over whether the U.S. will come to the island's defense. A successful strategy will require clarifying Taiwan's status, its critical place in Indo-Pacific politics, and its economic importance globally. The U.S. military contribution to Taiwan's security is crucial, but it requires strong political support here and abroad.

It begins by affirming that Taiwan is a sovereign, self-governing country, not a disputed Chinese province. It meets international law's criteria of statehood, such as defined territory, stable population and the performance of normal governmental functions such as viable currency and law enforcement. Washington, Tokyo and others would be entirely justified to extend diplomatic recognition, and its attendant legitimacy, to Taipei.

The 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, the foundational statement of current U.S.-China relations, is effectively dead. The communiqué says that "the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China," and "doesn't challenge that position." Beijing warped these words to mean "one China run by Beijing," a formulation the U.S. never accepted.

The reality the U.S. acknowledged in 1972 no longer exists. Taiwan's National Chengchi University has polled the island's people about their identity for 30 years. Between 1992 and 2021, those identifying as Taiwanese rose to 63.3% from 17.6%; those identifying as Chinese fell to 2.7% from 25.5%; those identifying as both Taiwanese and Chinese fell to 31.4% from 46.4%. (Some 2.7% didn't respond, down from 10.5%.) The "silent artillery of time," as Abraham Lincoln called it, will likely continue these trends. Taiwan's citizens have made up their own minds: There is no longer "one China" but "one China, one Taiwan," as Beijing has feared for decades.

Broader recognition of Taiwan's status as an independent state would be extremely helpful in expanding politico-military alliances to buttress the island's defenses against China. Yet Washington's support may be insufficient to deter Beijing from attempting to subjugate Taiwan (or near-offshore islands like Quemoy and Matsu). Formal or informal alliances that include Taipei would show Beijing that the costs of belligerence toward Taiwan are significantly higher than China may expect. One step would be forming an East Asia Quad, consisting of Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and America, complementing the existing Japan-India-Australia-U.S. Quad. Japan should welcome this development. Its decision makers increasingly understand that a Chinese attack on Taiwan is an attack on Japan. Both are part of "the first island chain" separating the

mainland from the broader Pacific, and their mutual security is inextricable.

It would be harder to persuade South Korea to join in such an effort due to historical animosities toward Japan and other factors, but its people are nonetheless aware of the consequences of Taiwan falling to China. The 2022 presidential election is an opportunity to debate whether to stand with its neighbors or risk eventually living under Greater China's suzerainty.

Vietnam, Singapore, Australia and Canada could join this Taiwan-centric grouping in due course.

Taipei's residual South China Sea territorial claims could be bargaining chips for closer relations with other partners, especially littoral states like Vietnam, the Philippines and Singapore. At this southern end of the first island chain, Taiwan's navy could make material contributions to freedom-of-navigation missions. Taiwan is also developing increasingly important cyberwarfare capabilities and artificial intelligence.

Similar cooperation with Pacific island states would also enhance Taiwan's reputation as a good neighbor. In addition, American and Taiwanese information statecraft in the Indo-Pacific and globally should expose China's hypocritical behavior on climate change and Covid and its repression of Uyghurs, Hong Kong and religious freedom. Failure to counter Beijing's extensive influence operations hampers efforts to constrain China and protect Taiwan.

Few Americans appreciate how critical an economic partner Taiwan is, especially its semiconductor manufacturing industry and its extensive trade links throughout the Indo-Pacific, all of which could support enhanced politico-military ties.

Economic issues are important for regional countries and Europeans, who may be less willing to engage in military action. These countries should be reminded of China's threat, including Beijing's weaponizing telecommunications companies like Huawei and ZTE and its brutality in taking Canadians hostage in retaliation for the legitimate arrest of Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou.

More military assets supporting Taiwan are critical but potentially futile without a fuller American strategic vision, with buy-in from citizens and other like-minded countries. That vision must be broad, persuasive and implemented without delay, to ensure the sustained popular support needed to prevail.

Mr. Bolton is author of "The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir." He served as the president's national security adviser, 2018-19, and ambassador to the United Nations, 2005-06.

---

## **A Chinese Commonwealth? An Unpopular Idea Resurfaces in Taiwan.**

The New York Times, By Farah Stockman, March 12, 2023

Ms. Stockman is a member of the editorial board. She recently traveled to Taiwan on a journalism fellowship with the East-West Center, which was administered in partnership with Ming Chuan University.

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Three months after Russia invaded Ukraine, Annette Lu, a former vice president of Taiwan, stood before reporters to promote a wildly unpopular idea. China and Taiwan, she said, should form a commonwealth that would be integrated economically, like the European Union, but remain separate politically. She called it One Zhonghua — a word that means "Chinese" in a cultural, ethnic or literary sense but is distinct from the word that refers to China in a political sense. It was a wink at the Chinese Communist Party's insistence that there is only one China and that Taiwan is an inextricable part of it.

One Zhonghua is not a new idea. The notion of a commonwealth or federation of independent Chinese states has been touted as a solution to Taiwan's dilemma for decades by academics, editorials and minor officials on both sides of the strait. After Russian troops invaded Ukraine, it surfaced again.

"For the first time, Taiwanese people realized that war is real," Andrew Hsia, vice chair of the K.M.T. opposition party in Taiwan, told me last month. He had just returned from a rare and controversial visit to mainland China — an attempt to improve the quality of life for Taiwanese people working in China and get to know the new Chinese leaders responsible for policy toward the island. He was dubious of the idea of a commonwealth but said that "any idea that can maintain the existing way of life and avoid conflict is worthy of discussion."

One Zhonghua is a fantasy, of course. President Xi Jinping of China, who considers Taiwan a rebellious province, has shown no appetite for anything that would leave Taiwan's sovereignty intact. In fact, China is expected to announce a sped-up timeline for reunifying with the island by force if necessary. Across the water, President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan stands firm on the island's right to determine its own fate and rejects anything that smacks of a union with China.

Yet the quixotic One Zhonghua campaign gets at the heart of the unsolved riddle of what Taiwan's relationship to China should be. The vast majority of Taiwanese people want to keep the status quo of undeclared, de facto independence, according to polls. Yet roughly 40 percent also said in a recent survey that they want better economic relations with China, and a smaller percentage said economic ties should be reduced. One million to two million Taiwanese — nearly 10 percent of the island's population — are estimated to live and work on the mainland.

As the rivalry between the United States and China heats up, many Taiwanese people are asking themselves how to preserve their incredibly innovative and prosperous open society. Should they prepare to fight like Ukraine or try to hammer out a deal to avoid conflict? How Taiwanese voters answer that question will determine who wins Taiwan's presidential election in January — and the fate of the island's fledgling democracy.

For the Democratic Progressive Party, the party currently in power, the best way to avoid a war is to bolster ties with the United States and buy enough weapons to make China think twice about launching an invasion. These days, Joseph Wu, the foreign minister, keeps a Ukrainian flag signed by Ukrainian soldiers in a prominent place in his office, next to two pairs of boxing gloves that were given to him by the mayor of Kyiv. In December the administration announced that it was extending

the length of compulsory military service from four months to one year.

Yet Taiwan is not Ukraine. In political terms, it is not recognized by the United Nations as an independent country. In practical terms, it's an island that would run out of natural gas in roughly eight days if it was blockaded. The Chinese economy, despite significant challenges, is vastly larger, more diverse and more attractive than the Russian economy. On the eve of the invasion, the Russian military was roughly four times as large as Ukraine's. Today the Chinese military is nearly 12 times as large as Taiwan's.

Regardless of whether Taiwanese people admit it, part of the country's prosperity comes from the fact that it has been a gateway to the biggest market in the world. At a nightclub in Taipei, I hung out with a concert promoter who couldn't wait to put on another event in Shanghai, where he earns more money, and a Nigerian British female rapper named Brazy, who came to Taiwan to learn to rap in Mandarin, hoping that her songs would go viral in China.

These days, a feeling of uncertainty hangs over Taipei. Almost nobody I spoke with had confidence that Taiwan could withstand an attack without the direct involvement of American troops. Bill Stanton, a retired American diplomat who once headed the equivalent of the U.S. embassy in Taipei and served in Beijing during the Tiananmen Square massacre, told me he'd faced bullies as a kid and that he sticks up for Taiwan for that reason: "They are small. They are easy to pick on," he said. "I think we all need to stand up for the little guy."

President Biden vowed four times over the past year or so to do just that, partly because defending Taiwan is seen as integral to defending Japan, South Korea and international shipping. But American policy has been deliberately ambiguous about exactly what support the United States would provide Taiwan in the event of a crisis. Social media accounts have flooded the island with warnings that Americans will ultimately abandon its residents to their fate.

There's also been a flurry of arrests of people suspected of being spies, including a Taiwanese military official who was reportedly paid to surrender on command.

Recently, Matt Pottinger, a National Security Council staff member in the Trump administration, gave a pep talk in Taipei. "A fiery resolve to defend one's homeland, family and way of life can compensate for inferior equipment, inferior numbers and inferior odds," he advised in a speech he gave in Mandarin, which cited the lessons from Ukraine. "But will must be cultivated."

For the D.P.P., part of that fiery resolve involves reorienting trade away from China and toward Japan, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, a project known as the Southbound policy.

That might work when it comes to computer chips, Taiwan's most lucrative industry. But fish farmers and orchard owners are skeptical that the Chinese market, which buys about 42 percent of the island's exports, can be replaced. Last summer, China banned Taiwanese grouper and wax apples, leading some farmers to change their stance. "Of course we want to have an independent Taiwan," one orchard owner told Lung Ying-tai, a former minister of culture. "But at what cost?" Taiwanese officials vowed to find new markets for the fish or consume them domestically. During a fancy lunch in Taipei, the deputy foreign minister removed the lid on a succulent dish and declared, "This is our freedom fish!"

Mr. Hsia, the vice chair of the K.M.T., told me that he asked for the ban on grouper to be lifted during his recent trip to China. He described the response of Chinese officials as cooperative and said they welcomed a delegation from Taiwan's fish-farming association days later. If China ends up lifting the ban, it would bolster the K.M.T.'s claim that it is the party that knows how to handle China.

The K.M.T. has a long history of arguing for economic integration with China. The party's roots date back to the nationalist army that lost a civil war against Chinese Communists in 1949 and escaped to Taiwan to regroup. K.M.T. officials, who initially ruled as a military dictatorship, were so committed to the dream of returning to the mainland for a rematch that, a Ming Chuan University professor told me, they routinely barred active-duty troops from getting married, out of fear they would be diverted from the cause.

The closest that Taiwan has ever come to One Zhonghua occurred between 2008 and 2016, under the administration of President Ma Ying-jeou of the K.M.T. He signed a raft of agreements with China, including a sweetheart trade deal that allowed many Taiwanese goods to be sold in China with reduced tariffs, without giving China the same access in return. That deal remains in place, and it's seen as vital to Taiwan's economy today.

But a second trade deal, which focused on services, was a bridge too far. Spooked that Taiwan was growing too close to China, protesters took over the legislature building in 2014 and helped push the K.M.T. out of power two years later in what was called the Sunflower Movement.

Since the D.P.P. won the 2016 elections, it has announced changes that underscored the separateness of the Taiwanese identity, shrinking the size of the words "Republic of China" on passports while making the word "Taiwan" much more prominent. The number of people who consider themselves Taiwanese grew from 17.6 percent in 1992 to 60.8 percent in 2022, according to Ching-hsin Yu, the director of the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University in Taipei. Young activists are dismayed that Ms. Lu, who once served five years in prison under the dictatorship for trying to bring democracy to Taiwan, is peddling One Zhonghua.

"Lu's proposal is actually very outdated," said Fei-fan Lin, a former protest leader who became deputy secretary general of the D.P.P. and is now a board member of the New Frontier Foundation, a D.P.P. think tank. China's crackdown on Hong Kong starting in 2019 removed any doubt that China would dismantle Taiwan's political system if it got the chance. "Can Chinese Nationalists (or Their Apologists) Please Shut Up About Zhonghua?" ran the headline of an article by Brian Hioe, a chronicler of progressive activism in Taipei, in New Bloom magazine last August. On Twitter, he has suggested that

figures like Ms. Lu, who is 78 years old, need to be “put out to pasture.”

-Yet for the older generation in Taiwan, the idea of being Chinese still holds deep cultural power. Lung Ying-tai, the former culture minister, told me that since China was unified in 221 B.C.E., many in China have harbored the notion that Chinese people should all live in unity under the same ruler.

Those who tried to break away from the emperor never lasted long. “In thousands of years of recorded history, Taiwan is the first open society of Chinese people,” she told me. “It is a miracle. How we survive will be another miracle.”

Farah Stockman joined the Times editorial board in 2020. For four years, she was a reporter for The Times, covering politics, social movements and race. She previously worked at The Boston Globe, where she won a Pulitzer Prize for commentary in 2016. @fstockman

---

## Xi, Biden and the \$10 Trillion Cost of War Over Taiwan

Bloomberg News, By Jennifer Welch, Jenny Leonard, Maeva Cousin, Gerard DiPippo, and Tom Orlik, January 8, 2024

Taiwan’s election highlights the potential for a conflict that would decimate the global economy.

War over Taiwan would have a cost in blood and treasure so vast that even those unhappiest with the status quo have reason not to risk it. Bloomberg Economics estimate the price tag at around \$10 trillion, equal to about 10% of global GDP — dwarfing the blow from the war in Ukraine, Covid pandemic and Global Financial Crisis.

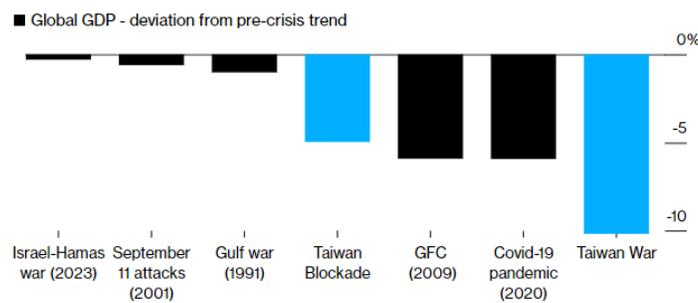
China’s rising economic and military heft, Taiwan’s burgeoning sense of national identity, and fractious relations between Beijing and Washington mean the conditions for a crisis are in place. With cross-Strait relations on the ballot, Taiwan’s Jan. 13 election is a potential flashpoint.

Few put a high probability on an imminent Chinese invasion. The People’s Liberation Army isn’t massing troops on the coast. Reports of corruption in China’s military cast doubts on President Xi Jinping’s ability to wage a successful campaign. US officials say tensions eased somewhat at the November summit between President Joe Biden and Xi, who pledged “heart-warming” measures to woo foreign investors.

Still, the outbreak of war in Ukraine and Gaza are reminders of how long-simmering tensions can erupt into conflict.

### The Global Risk of a Taiwan War

Model estimates show a Taiwan war could have a bigger impact on global GDP than other recent shocks



Sources: Bloomberg Economics, IMF  
Note: Israel-Hamas war, Taiwan blockade, and Taiwan war are Bloomberg Economics estimates.

Everyone from Wall Street investors to military planners and the swathe of businesses that rely on Taiwan’s semiconductors are already moving to hedge against the risk.

National security experts in the Pentagon, think tanks in the US and Japan, and global consulting firms are gaming out scenarios from a Chinese maritime “quarantine” of Taiwan, to the seizure of Taiwan’s outlying islands, and a full-scale Chinese invasion.

Jude Blanchette, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, says interest in a Taiwan crisis from multinational firms he advises has “exploded” since Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The subject comes up in 95% of conversations, he said.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the semiconductor

shortage as the world reopened from Covid lockdowns, provide a small glimpse of what’s at stake for the global economy. The impact of war in the Taiwan Strait would be far bigger.

Taiwan makes most of the world’s advanced logic semiconductors, and a lot of lagging edge chips as well. Globally, 5.6% of total value added comes from sectors using chips as direct inputs — nearly \$6 trillion. Total market cap for the top 20 customers of chip giant Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. is around \$7.4 trillion. The Taiwan Strait is one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes...

---

## To avert war with China, the U.S. must prioritize Taiwan over Ukraine

The Washington Post, By Elbridge A. Colby and Alex Velez-Green, May 18, 2023

Elbridge A. Colby served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for strategy and force development from 2017 to 2018, and is the author of “The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict.” Alexander Velez-Green served as national security adviser to Sen. Josh Hawley (R-Mo).

Make sense of the latest news and debates with our daily newsletter

Many argue that the United States does not need to choose between aiding Ukraine and deterring a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. This is a comforting but dangerous delusion. The sad truth: It does.

The main question is how to do so. The answer is by focusing U.S. resources on Taiwan’s defense against China, by far the United States’ strongest rival, while relying primarily on European allies to defend against a weakened Russia.

The Pentagon regularly says that preparing for conflict with China over Taiwan is its top priority. And rightly so. If Taiwan falls to a Chinese assault, the United States’ military position in the region, and Asian states’ confidence in Washington’s ability and resolve to confront Beijing, will both be gravely weakened. The result would be a major step toward Chinese

hegemony over the world's largest and most important market. If China can establish such dominance, it will be able to supplant the United States as the world's premier economy and use that leverage to diminish our prosperity and interfere in our national life — with dire implications for Americans' everyday lives.

But the United States' ability to prevent China from conquering Taiwan has been severely eroded in recent years. China's navy already dwarfs our own; its air and space forces are rapidly improving; and its missile forces threaten to prevent the U.S. military from intervening effectively to defend Taiwan. Even the normally confident commander of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command recently testified that trends in the Pacific are going "in the wrong direction." As a result, it is now a very serious question whether the United States can defeat a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Restoring deterrence is still possible — if we get Taiwan and U.S. forces in Asia what they need as quickly as possible. But we cannot expect to do that while delivering so much aid to Ukraine. The fact is that both Ukraine and Taiwan need many of the same weapons, the United States has only limited quantities of those weapons in its available stockpiles, and our defense industry will not be able to produce enough of these critical capabilities for years. These trade-offs will worsen as China's historic military buildup continues and the war in Ukraine goes on.

First, the United States must accelerate delivery of critical weapons to Taiwan, including strike capabilities such as HIMARS, ATACMS, GMLRS and drones, as well as defensive systems such as NASAMS, Patriots, Harpoons, Stingers and Javelins. Americans have grown familiar with the names of several of these military systems because the United States has sent many of them to Ukraine. But Taiwan also desperately needs them — including weapons for its ground forces that would confront an amphibious invasion.

To accomplish this, the Biden administration should use presidential drawdown authority to rapidly send weapons to Taiwan from U.S. stockpiles, as the administration has announced it will do. But it must favor Taiwan over Ukraine for any weapons that both need.

Unfortunately, U.S. stockpiles are depleted as a result of aid to Ukraine, so Taiwan will be forced to rely more heavily on the slower foreign military sales process. To help it do so as quickly as possible, the administration should put Taiwan at the front of the line for foreign military sales as well — ahead of Ukraine but also ahead of partners in the Middle East and beyond.

At the same time, Washington should ramp up security assistance to Taiwan. Such assistance can facilitate both drawdowns and new sales. But it should not be a blank check. Instead, U.S. aid to Taiwan should be strictly conditioned on Taiwan increasing defense spending and embracing an asymmetric defense strategy.

Second, the administration and Congress need to urgently expand U.S. defense production by reinvigorating our anemic defense industrial base — and fast. As they do so, it is imperative to focus on boosting inventories for the Pacific ahead of Europe or elsewhere. Where trade-offs arise because of limited funds, suppliers, labor, components or other constraints, Taiwan's defense must take precedence.

Finally, for all its talk about deterring China, the administration has made Ukraine's defense its clear priority with regular high-level engagement, congressional briefings and requests for funds. By contrast, the administration left U.S. Indo-Pacific Command with almost \$3.5 billion in unfunded priorities this year. The administration must treat Taiwan's defense with far greater urgency, including by ensuring that U.S. forces in Asia receive essential intelligence resources and that the United States' political capital is laser-focused on bolstering our defensive perimeter in Asia.

None of this means we should abandon Europe. Instead, our allies must take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense, relying on the United States mainly for its extended nuclear deterrent and select conventional capabilities that do not detract from our ability to deter China. Our European allies must also take the lead in helping Ukraine.

This redistribution of labor within NATO is not just a matter of fairness. It is also imperative if Europe is to be able to deter and defend itself against Russia while the United States focuses on the much bigger challenge from China. The Russia threat is not going away. We and Europe should prepare accordingly.

Prioritization is never easy — but it is long overdue. The administration and Congress have rightly described China as the preeminent threat to the United States, but they have not acted with the focus, scale and urgency needed to address it. The window for facing the Chinese threat to Taiwan, with all that entails for Americans' concrete interests, is fast closing. Failing to do so could lead to the most consequential conflict since World War II.

---