

Chapter 6

Not Drawing a Parallel. Ukraine and Taiwan: An Indian Perspective

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Introduction

Russia's war against Ukraine has not only had economic, diplomatic, and geopolitical repercussions, but also exaggerated the fear of accelerated conflicts in the Indo-Pacific, a region with several unresolved conflicts (from Northeast Asia to the Himalayas). The dissonance in political stands on the Russia-Ukraine conflict among Asian states is also a manifestation of this fear of the Indo-Pacific being unwittingly caught in the new Cold War situation precipitated by the Ukraine war in the wake of increased ideological bipolarization.¹

On the one hand, China, India, and the states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), among others in the Global South, have chosen neutrality, dialogue, humanitarian aid, and abstention in multilateral forums.² India and the Global South see this as a currently applicable “independent” approach to secure their respective interests (e.g., energy, food, and weapons security) while also not souring historical associations and continuing outreach with the West. However, for China, which has been falling out of favor with the West, the intent is certainly to showcase solidarity with the anti-U.S. sentiment while coalescing China-centered Global South/emerging economies.³ The expansion of both the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa plus (BRICS+) is evidence of China's promotion of the “true

¹ Michael Hirsh, “We Are Now in a Global Cold War,” *Foreign Policy*, June 27, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/06/27/new-cold-war-nato-summit-united-states-russia-ukraine-china/>.

² Jagannath Panda and Eerishika Pankaj, “New Delhi on the Ukraine War: Between Eurasia and the Indo-Pacific Region,” Italian Institute for International Political Studies, May 26, 2022, <https://www.ispionline.it/en/publicazione/new-delhi-ukraine-war-between-eurasia-and-indo-pacific-region-35054>; David Adler, “The West v Russia: Why the Global South Isn't Taking Sides,” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/mar/10/russia-ukraine-west-global-south-sanctions-war>.

³ Vincent Ni, “Ukraine War Deepens China's Mistrust of the West,” *The Guardian*, June 6, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/06/ukraine-war-deepens-chinas-mistrust-of-the-west>.

spirit of multilateralism and multiculturalism” in developing economies.⁴

On the other hand, U.S. treaty allies like Japan, Australia, and South Korea have not only provided nonlethal military aid (including bulletproof vests, blankets, helmets, and medicine) but also embraced the West’s hardline approach, including punitive sanctions against Russia, as a means to protect national interests and territorial sovereignty against growing intimidation from authoritarianism.⁵ Their hardened stance is also part of a growing trend in the Indo-Pacific toward strengthening defense capabilities, evidenced through increased military spending amid a shared concern about the accelerated North Korean nuclear threat and its growing convergence with China, as well as China’s military adventures in the South and East China Seas, Indian Ocean, and Taiwan Strait.⁶

In this context, the other crises in Asia notwithstanding, the long-standing Taiwan question is especially relevant not just regionally but globally. Primarily, the reason is Taiwan’s centrality for China. The long-term success and legitimacy of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)’s ruling regime, namely the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), is intricately interlinked with the prevention of Taiwanese independence and with ultimately achieving Taiwan’s reunification with China. Following President Xi Jinping’s record re-coronation at the 20th National Congress, the reunification pursuit has received a significant thrust, evidenced by the harsher tone on Taiwan as compared to the 19th Congress.⁷

Besides, the Taiwan contingency bodes ill for the Asian stability, including economic repercussions on an emerging region due to the Taiwan Strait being one of the most lucrative maritime trade routes that connect Northeast Asia to the West. The question of

⁴ Leronardo Dinic, “Will the ‘BRICS-Plus’ Keep Growing?” *China-US Focus*, October 3, 2022, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/finance-economy/will-the-brics-plus-keep-growing>; “What Is the Shanghai Co-Operation Organisation?” *The Economist*, September 14, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2022/09/14/what-is-the-shanghai-co-operation-organisation>.

⁵ Jiji Kyodo, “Japan Readopts Hard-Line Stance on Territorial Dispute with Russia,” *The Japan Times*, April 22, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/04/22/national/japan-russia-islands/>; “Invasion of Ukraine by Russia,” Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/crisis-hub/invasion-ukraine-russia>; “In Rare Stand, South Korea, Singapore Unveil Sanctions on Russia,” Al Jazeera, February 28, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/2/28/in-rare-stand-south-korea-singapore-unveil-sanctions-on-russia>.

⁶ “World Military Expenditure Passes \$2 Trillion for First Time,” SIPRI, April 25, 2022, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>.

⁷ Helen Davidson and Emma Graham-Harrison, “Xi Jinping Opens Chinese Communist Party Congress with Warning for Taiwan,” *The Guardian*, October 16, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/16/xi-jinping-speech-opens-china-communist-party-congress>; Jagannath Panda, “The Essence of Xi Jinping’s 20th National Congress Report,” *The National Interest*, October 21, 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/essence-xi-jinping%E2%80%99s-20th-national-congress-report-205479>.

Asian states’ “interdependence” on China and its resurgence to fuel their overall growth, while they are acutely aware of the need for the U.S. to balance Chinese assertiveness and maintain the Cross-Strait status quo, is a rather valid concern.⁸

Moreover, the issue involves not just the U.S., but also U.S. allies like Japan and Australia, as well as its partners like India, which fears the domino impact of the Taiwan crisis on the Himalayan border and in the Indian Ocean region. Officials in Australia and Japan, in particular, have alluded to supporting the U.S. were it to decide on defending Taiwan.⁹ The two have recently also deepened their military cooperation by signing a landmark pact to share military intelligence on China.¹⁰ Importantly, the four states of Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., through their growing bilateral connections as well as via their security grouping, the increasingly relevant Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), are attempting to create a stronger deterrence network, if not a security architecture, against China’s growing belligerence.

Against such a scenario, what can be made of the drawing of parallels between Ukraine and Taiwan? Is it justifiable or needed to ascertain a level of deterrence or preparation measures against China? Or is it an exercise in futility, or worse, sensationalism? In a similar vein, to what extent would China count on lessons from the Ukrainian war? Could Indo-Pacific states like India and Japan recalibrate their Taiwan stance for the greater good, i.e., regional security?

Drawing Parallels: A Question of Hits and Misses?

Even before Russian President Vladimir Putin’s “special operation” against Ukraine began, commentators had begun to analyze the “uncanny resemblance” between the crises in

⁸ Kevin Varley, “Taiwan Tensions Raise Risks in One of Busiest Shipping Lanes,” Bloomberg, August 2, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-02/taiwan-tensions-raise-risks-in-one-of-busiest-shipping-lanes>; Ashley, J. Tellis, “The Regional Perspective: Asian Attitudes toward the Taiwan Conflict and Future Implications,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and China Reform Forum, April 6, 2005, <https://carnegieendowment.org/files/TellisPaper1.pdf>.

⁹ “‘Inconceivable’ Australia Would Not Join U.S. to Defend Taiwan – Australian Defence Minister,” Reuters, November 13, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/inconceivable-australia-would-not-join-us-defend-taiwan-australian-defence-2021-11-12/>; Anthony Kuhn, “After Being Silent for Decades, Japan Now Speaks Up About Taiwan – And Angers China,” NPR, August 2, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/26/1020866539/japans-position-on-defending-taiwan-has-taken-a-remarkable-shift>.

¹⁰ Daniel Hurst, “Australia and Japan to Share Intelligence on China in Security Deal, Ambassador Says,” *The Guardian*, October 19, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/oct/20/australia-and-japan-to-share-intelligence-on-china-in-security-deal-ambassador-says>.

Eastern Europe and the Taiwan Strait.¹¹ There was talk of Ukraine being a “proxy” for Taiwan; and the comparisons about the respective threats to the two vibrant democracies that champion free-market economy (namely Ukraine and Taiwan) from geographically close authoritarian strongholds (Russia and China) were labelled “prophetic.”¹²

Even the then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson joined the fray by stating that any Russian attack would “be heard in East Asia, they would be heard in Taiwan,” although Taipei continued to emphasize the geographic differences between Taiwan and Ukraine.¹³ China, too, rubbished talks of comparison primarily to assert Taiwan’s status as an “inalienable” part of China’s territory. According to an official statement from China’s foreign ministry,

Confusing the Taiwan question with the Ukrainian issue is totally out of ulterior motives ... to take advantage of chaos ... to create a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait ... and contain China’s revitalization and development.¹⁴

Momentarily keeping the question of Chinese hegemonic motives vis-à-vis Taiwan aside, the similarities drawn in such parallels were superficial to an extent, in that any neighboring democratic state faces a certain level of threat from an autocracy under a strongman with imperialistic ambitions. For example, the Korean Peninsula and India’s Himalayan border both face a similar situation. Thus, the argument of Russia and China as “overwhelmingly powerful” neighbor states that respectively see Ukraine and Taiwan historically as an inalienable part of their own exclusive sphere of interest or territory is simplistic. Such contentions ignore the rich, complex, and unique histories of two disparate regions, and also in some cases even sensationalize the Taiwan contingency by continually spreading a sense of impending war.

¹¹ “Ukraine and Taiwan: Two Conflict Zones with Destabilizing Potential,” MERICS, February 4, 2022, <https://merics.org/de/kommentar/ukraine-and-taiwan-two-conflict-zones-destabilizing-potential>.

¹² Nicholas Hanson, “Whatever Russia Does in Ukraine, China Will Be Watching,” *The National Interest*, January 10, 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/whatever-russia-does-ukraine-china-will-be-watching-199301>; Hanson, “Whatever Russia Does in Ukraine, China Will Be Watching.”

¹³ “UK Says Western Inaction on Ukraine Would Send Dangerous Message for Taiwan,” Reuters, February 19, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russia-wants-inflate-tensions-by-ignoring-planned-peace-talks-kyiv-says-2022-02-19/>; “Taiwan Says Inappropriate to Link Its Situation to Ukraine’s,” Reuters, February 28, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/taiwan-says-inappropriate-link-its-situation-ukraines-2022-02-28/>.

¹⁴ “Confusing the Taiwan Question with the Ukrainian Issue Is Totally Out of Ulterior Motives,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (MFAPRC), April 18, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/202204/t20220418_10669227.html.

This sensationalization of the threat from China, especially in Western media, was most evident during the visit to Taiwan by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi, wherein the Indo-Pacific at large was in danger of becoming the scapegoat of hegemonic ambitions.¹⁵ Rather than downplaying China's narrative of the Pelosi visit, some in the media overzealously highlighted China's bombastic claims and threats, which were unnecessarily portrayed as impending actions that could lead to war.¹⁶

Notably, China's Taiwan reunification plans have been in the works for a long time, and hence are not contingent or derived from the relatively recent (though brewing) situation in Eastern Europe. For decades, the PRC has positioned missiles on its coast pointed at and within striking distance of Taiwan.¹⁷ In fact, throughout history, the level of antagonism from Beijing has waned and surged depending on which of Taiwan's two main parties was in control after democratization: the Kuomintang (KMT) party, which does not support Taiwan's independence and favors closer ties with Beijing, versus the ruling pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which is unwilling to recognize the 1992 Consensus¹⁸ and is considered a disruptive/radical entity by China.

Under Xi, China-Taiwan tensions have intensified in part due to the ruling DPP's commitment to safeguarding "Taiwan's freedom, democracy, and way of life, as well as ... the Taiwanese people's right to decide our own future," which is a sore point for Beijing.¹⁹ Another important reason is Taiwan's growing international profile, courtesy of President Tsai Ing-wen's COVID-19 measures, successful international outreach, and Taiwan's

¹⁵ Wilfred Chan, "Hoopla and Yellow Journalism: Taiwanese Americans Bemoan Media Fearmongering over Pelosi Visit," *The Guardian*, August 3, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/02/taiwanese-americans-pelosi-visit-taiwan-china>.

¹⁶ Niklas Swanström, "Hijacking Speaker Pelosi's Visit: Beijing Distends the Cross-Straits," Institute for Security and Development Policy, August 8, 2022, <https://isd.se/hijacking-speaker-pelosis-visit-beijing-distends-the-cross-straits/>.

¹⁷ "Why the Taiwan Issue Is So Dangerous," excerpts from interviews with David Lampton, Kurt Campbell, Erik Eckholm, Fred Thompson, Yang Jiechi, Zhu Bangzao, and Joseph Wu, *Frontline*, Autumn 2001, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/china/experts/taiwan.html>.

¹⁸ A controversial political understanding/agreement between the CCP and the KMT on the "One China" policy/principle. Also read, Jessica Drun, "The KMT Continues to Grapple with its '1992 Consensus,'" *Global Taiwan Brief* vol. 7, no. 19 (September 21, 2022), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/09/the-kmt-continues-to-grapple-with-its-1992-consensus/>

¹⁹ "Full Text of President Tsai Ing-wen's National Day Address," *Focus Taiwan*, October 10, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201710100004.aspx>; "Embassy Spokesperson's Remarks on the DPP Authorities' Provocative Actions for 'Taiwan independence' and the External Forces' Moves of Playing the 'Taiwan card,'" PRC embassy, September 1, 2022, http://gb.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/PressandMedia/Spokepersons/202209/t20220902_10759332.htm.

ascendance as the fulcrum of the semiconductor industry.²⁰ However, despite the spike in tensions, the Chinese tactics (e.g., the post-Pelosi multi-directional coercion) seem to have become somewhat normalized in Taiwan; as a result, some are worried about what is called Taiwan's "complacency."²¹ Yet such fears are not productive, nor correct. Taiwan has upped its defense spending amid its focus on military reform and introduced diversification policies. Above all, the fact that the majority of Taiwanese continue to support the pro-independence party highlights the sturdiness to fight.²²

Unarguably, both Ukraine and Taiwan are democratic territories that are the targets of aggressive nationalism from more militarily advanced and dangerous nearby autocracies. Still, it is important to realize that while lessons can be drawn, international conflicts are unlikely to be replicated as they vary with the evolving context. Chinese President Xi is not an ideological twin of Russian President Putin, and Taiwan is not Ukraine.²³ They do not have the same political and legal status, for starters.²⁴ Only 14 states (including the Vatican) officially recognized Taiwan (Republic of China or ROC) as a nation in 2022. It is often called a "de facto"²⁵ state, a complicated status that some argue does not really exist. In the United Nations (UN), the PRC is China's only legitimate and legal representative.²⁶

In contrast, Ukraine is a sovereign state, a member of the UN, and a "de jure" state. Moreover, with the 2005 anti-secession law, China has created a legal instrument to

²⁰ Ryan Hass, "The COVID-19 Crisis Has Revealed Taiwan's Resilience," Brookings, June 15, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/06/15/the-covid-19-crisis-has-revealed-taiwans-resilience/>.

²¹ James Baron, "Taiwan and Ukraine: Parallels, Divergences and Potential Lessons," *Global Asia* vol. 17, no. 2 (June 2022), https://www.globalasia.org/v17no2/cover/taiwan-and-ukraine-parallels-divergences-and-potential-lessons_james-baron.

²² "Taiwan Unveils Record Defence Budget amid Tensions with China," Al Jazeera, August 25, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/8/25/taiwan-unveils-record-defence-budget-amid-tensions-with-china>; Christina Lai, "Power of the Weak: Taiwan's Strategy in Countering China's Economic Coercion," *China Brief* vol. 21, no. 21 (November 5, 2021), <https://jamestown.org/program/power-of-the-weak-taiwans-strategy-in-counteracting-chinas-economic-coercion/>.

²³ Andrew Scobell and Lucy Stevenson-Yang, "China Is Not Russia. Taiwan Is Not Ukraine," United States Institute of Peace (USIP), March 4, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/03/china-not-russia-taiwan-not-ukraine>.

²⁴ Maëlle Lefèvre, "Ukraine-Taiwan: To Compare or Not to Compare, That is the Question?" Asia Centre, March 1, 2022, <https://asiacentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/UT-template-VF.pdf>.

²⁵ Ben Saul, "Explainer: The Complex Question of Taiwanese Independence," *The Conversation*, August 16, 2022, <https://theconversation.com/explainer-the-complex-question-of-taiwanese-independence-188584>.

²⁶ Frank Chiang, "Sadly, Taiwan Is Still Not a State," *Taipei Times*, March 12, 2005, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2005/03/12/2003245941>.

justify a military invasion of Taiwan.²⁷ This directly correlates with President Xi stating at the opening of the 20th CCP Party Congress that he intends to contain separatist elements, and so using “force” against Taiwan is not out of bounds.²⁸

After more than eight months of the Ukraine war, the regional complexities are now being included in the narrative, and a more nuanced take has certainly emerged. It now includes generalized parallels with caveats noting that Ukraine is not just geographically far from Taiwan, but also has markedly different historical and geopolitical issues as well.

No Immediate Threat of a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan?

Undoubtedly, the geographical distance notwithstanding, certain similarities between Ukraine and Taiwan are obvious – the two democracies face existential threats from authoritarian states ruled by imperialistic strongmen as well as the United States as a democratic superpower in declining relevance taking the lead to protect the larger goal of democratic ideals. What is worrying though is that Ukraine seems to have become a test case to justify or criticize American power and credibility. Such fickle narratives based on weak hypotheses will only complicate matters in the case of Taiwan, where the stakes are naturally high.

Moreover, despite an escalation of China’s military incursions into Taiwan’s air defense zone and the tenuous U.S.-China rivalry, U.S. military experts have denied fears about any immediate worries of an “imminent” invasion, especially as a consequent action to or in conjunction with the Ukraine war, for the following reasons:²⁹

First, there is the geographical reason. Taiwan is an island separated from mainland China by 100 miles of sea, whereas Ukraine and Russia share a 1,200-mile land boundary. Thus, any Chinese invasion would be a massive, intricate operation that would be obvious to the world well in advance.

Second, Taiwan is a dominant supplier of semiconductors and electronics (making

²⁷ Edward Cody, “China Sends Warning to Taiwan with Anti-Secession Law,” *Washington Post*, March 16, 2005, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2005/03/08/china-sends-warning-to-taiwan-with-anti-secession-law/5dcdfae8-4523-4350-9d45-77a85f6b240f/>.

²⁸ “Key Xi Quotes at China’s 20th Communist Party Congress,” Reuters, October 16, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/key-xi-quotes-chinas-20th-communist-party-congress-2022-10-16/>; Jesse Johnson, “Xi Refuses to Rule out Taking Taiwan by Force, Warning of ‘dangerous Storms’ Ahead,” *The Japan Times*, October 16, 2022, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/10/16/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/xi-jinping-ccp-congress/>.

²⁹ “Taiwan: China Attack Not Imminent, but US Watching Closely, Says Gen Milley,” BBC, July 3, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-62022308>.

65 percent of the world's semiconductors and almost 90 percent of the advanced chips).³⁰ Hence, it has a strong role in the world economy, and its security is a top priority to sustain global manufacturing chains. In addition, Taiwan is Washington's ninth-largest economic partner; in contrast, Ukraine is ranked 67th among the goods trading partners by the U.S. Trade Representative.

Third, Taiwan's strategic importance to the Indo-Pacific has increasingly grown. The Biden administration's Indo-Pacific strategy, released in February 2022, has continued the trend to bolster regional security and counter Chinese coercion in order to maintain "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."³¹ Moreover, according to the Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. is obligated to provide Taiwan weapons for defense, highlighting the continued importance attached to the self-governing island. Yet, there are questions whether and in what capacity the U.S. would engage in the event of Taiwan's invasion, especially as it did not deploy soldiers to defend Ukraine.

Here, while it is true that the U.S. has been vague about its intentions on intervening in Taiwan in the event of an attack, it is important to note that the U.S. is first and foremost an (Indo) Pacific power with significant interests in the region. Its interest in Central Europe is not that prominent in comparison. This would go much beyond simply defending Taiwan. In such a circumstance, the U.S. would also rely heavily on its Indo-Pacific partner states for support. The reaction of each of the Indo-Pacific states to a potential Taiwan invasion – which remains unlikely – would draw from each other; while the U.S. would rely on its partners and allies, they in turn would look to the U.S. to determine the extent of their involvement.

Taiwan's Security: India, Japan, and the Indo-Pacific

China's military activities in the Taiwan Strait have been escalating since the DPP came back into power in 2020, largely (among many other factors) because the CCP regime fears a bolstered attempt by Taiwan to rejuvenate the pro-independence movement. Official communications between the PRC and Taiwan were already suspended indefinitely in 2016 when Tsai (who is considered a separatist by China) took office as

³⁰ Saibal Dasgupta, "Race for Semiconductors Influences Taiwan Conflict," VOA, August 10, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/race-for-semiconductors-influences-taiwan-conflict-/6696432.html>.

³¹ "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States" (The White House, February 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

president.³²

Following the thwarting of the democracy movement in Hong Kong, the “successful” imposition of the wide-ranging, draconian new national security law (NSL), and the effective “cleansing” of the electoral system to ensure the survival of only “true” patriots, similar tactics in Taiwan are to be expected.³³ The introduction of the NSL in Hong Kong, which amounts to a breach of the “one country, two systems” principle because of the loss of democratic freedoms, is a potent indicator of Taiwan’s future. Notably, there are contentions that the amendments to the CCP constitution about Hong Kong linking the “full, faithful, and resolute” implementation of the “one country, two systems” policy with Taiwanese independence is a warning for Taiwan.³⁴

Concurrently, not only have the number of intrusions into Taiwan’s air defense zone spiked considerably, but irregular grey-zone activities like cyberattacks, increased military patrols, economic coercion, and diplomatic isolation have become the norm for the past two years so as to exhaust the island’s defense resources and put pressure on the U.S. and its allies in the region.³⁵ Moreover, China’s continuous forays into creating legal frameworks to amplify its reunification attempt present a grimmer future.

A glimmer of such “encroachment” tactics was witnessed in the wake of Pelosi’s Taiwan visit, when the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) carried out naval-air joint drills that surrounded the island and crossed the median line and fired missiles over the island for the first time in history in an effort to normalize its activities closer to Taiwan, in addition to increased thrust of the now routine grey-zone tactics.³⁶

Notably, the Ukraine war has put into question whether the desire to pursue a peaceful global future by controlling or forsaking weaponization (Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in 1994 in exchange for security guarantees) is a pipe dream, or conducive

³² Yimou Lee, Sarah Wu and Greg Torode, “Analysis: China’s Freeze on Taiwan Contact Fuels Worry as Tensions Build,” Reuters, November 17, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/chinas-freeze-taiwan-contact-fuels-worry-tensions-build-2022-11-17/>.

³³ “Hong Kong National Security Law: What Is It and Is It Worrying?” BBC, June 28, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-52765838>.

³⁴ “Does China Intend to Rule Taiwan under ‘One Country, Two Systems?’” Bangkok Post, October 29, 2022, <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2425387/does-china-intend-to-rule-taiwan-under-one-country-two-systems->.

³⁵ Yimou Lee, David Lague, and Ben Blanchard, “China Launches ‘Gray-Zone’ Warfare to Subdue Taiwan,” Reuters, December 10, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/hongkong-taiwan-military/>.

³⁶ Phelim Kine, “China’s Median Line Violations Suggest Taiwan ‘Decapitation’ Rehearsal,” *Politico*, September 1, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/09/01/chinas-violations-suggest-taiwan-decapitation-rehearsal-00054568>; Lee et al., “China Launches ‘Gray-Zone’ Warfare to Subdue Taiwan.”

to national interests, in a dangerous world with adversaries willing to take the nuclear option.³⁷ This was evidenced by Putin's flagrantly unapologetic tone while proclaiming his willingness to use all options as "not a bluff."³⁸ Hence, even as the debates about an exploding arms race in the Indo-Pacific are pertinent, equally important is developing deterrence capabilities to avoid war in the face of self-serving obstinate rivals focused on fantastical visions of both past and future.

Against such a scenario, the role of U.S. allies like India and Japan, as well as security groupings like the Quad, becomes all the more important to maintain a stable, peaceful rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific.

Japan's Hardening Stance Gets Vindicated?

Largely due to the increased Chinese threat in its neighborhood recently, Japan has been vocal about crossing China's "red" line on the Taiwan question.³⁹ This is in line with Shinzo Abe's oft-repeated statement about the direct correlation of the Taiwan Contingency to Japanese interests. Defense white papers in 2021 and the 2022 focused on the impending crisis or the "sense of crisis" in Taiwan, and subsequently, Japan's important policy documents have highlighted the need to monitor China's activities in the Taiwan Strait. Even during the controversial Pelosi visit, despite stringent criticism from China, Japan's solidarity with democracy and the U.S. highlighted Prime Minister

³⁷ Joshua Keating, "Will More Countries Want Nuclear Weapons after the War in Ukraine?" Grid, June 1, 2022, <https://www.grid.news/story/global/2022/06/01/will-more-countries-want-nuclear-weapons-after-the-war-in-ukraine/>.

³⁸ At the end of 2022, Putin later denied any intentions of using nuclear weapons ("We see no need for that") and insisted on not using weapons of mass destruction first ("We have not gone mad, we are aware of what nuclear weapons are"). At the same time, he has asserted that the risk of nuclear war is rising. In February 2023, it was reported that the Norwegian Intelligence Service has called attention to the presence of tactical nuclear weapons on Russian vessels in its annual report. See, "Will Russia Use Nuclear Weapons? Putin's Warnings Explained," Reuters, October 5, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/qa-will-russia-use-nuclear-weapons-putins-warnings-explained-2022-10-04/>; Alys Davies, "Russia's Putin Says He Won't Use Nuclear Weapons in Ukraine," Associated Press, October 28, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/putin-europe-government-and-politics-c541449bf88999c117b033d2de08d26d>; "Putin: Nuclear risk Is Rising, But We Are Not Mad," BBC, December 7, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63893316>; Jon Jackson, "Russian Warships Armed with Nuclear Weapons Deployed: Norway," *Newsweek*, February 14, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/russian-warships-armed-nuclear-weapons-deployed-norway-1781135>.

³⁹ Jagannath Panda, "Pelosi's Taiwan Visit: Has It Burdened Japan's Taiwan Trajectory?" *Japan Forward*, August 25, 2022, <https://japan-forward.com/asias-next-page-pelosis-taiwan-visit-has-it-burdened-japans-taiwan-trajectory/>.

Kishida's intent to sharpen multi-directional deterrence against China.

Japan's new intelligence pact with Australia, strengthened alliance with the U.S., growing ties with South Korea, defiance against Russia, and steady bonhomie with India (despite India's steadfast position on Russia) convey an adamant refusal to kowtow to China's coercion or intimidation tactics. Moreover, Japan's shift in policy against Russia has highlighted Prime Minister Kishida's concerns for the Indo-Pacific as outlined in his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore in June 2022, in which he warned that "Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow."⁴⁰ For Japan, China's "coercion" and "faits accomplis" in the East and South China Seas are unilateral attempts to alter the status quo.

Notably, Xi's increasingly absolutist rule and the rise of total loyalists in his coterie following the 20th CCP National Congress have hastened fears in Japan of being further drawn into escalating conflict with China over not just the status quo changes in the disputed Senkaku Islands but also Xi's intention to forcefully invade Taiwan if needed.⁴¹

Against such a scenario, Japan, in a bold action, released three strategic documents, namely the new National Security Strategy (NSS), the National Defense Strategy (NDS), and the Defense Buildup Program.⁴² Two important aspects of this move are the increase in Japan's defense budget and counterstrike capabilities, which form part of its long-term deterrence strategy. In addition, the NSS has hardened its stance on China, Russia, and North Korea, while describing Taiwan as an "extremely important partner" (although Japan's basic position on Taiwan remains unchanged).⁴³ It is clear that the "mounting" concerns about the Taiwan Strait are part of Japan's new pragmatism on defense.

On the economic front, Xi's increasingly inward-looking policies do not bode well for Japanese companies' interests, including a higher risk of technology leaks.⁴⁴ The latter is a significant concern amid China's increasing use of hybrid tools for coercion.

⁴⁰ "Ukraine Today Could Be East Asia Tomorrow": Japan PM Warns," France24, June 10, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220610-ukraine-today-could-be-east-asia-tomorrow-japan-pm-warns>.

⁴¹ Jagannath Panda, "What the Xi Jinping Historic Third Term Means for Japan," *Japan Forward*, November 4, 2022, <https://japan-forward.com/asias-next-page-what-the-xi-jinping-historic-third-term-means-for-japan/>.

⁴² Mirna Galic, "What You Need to Know About Japan's New National Security Strategy," USIP, December 19, 2022, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/12/what-you-need-know-about-japans-new-national-security-strategy>

⁴³ "Japan's Security Policy," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (December 27, 2022), https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page1we_000081.html

⁴⁴ Maya Kaneko, "China's State-Led Economy Could Put Japan Firms in Tight Spot," *Kyodo News*, October 23, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/10/6f42a697c141-focus-chinas-state-led-economy-could-put-japan-firms-in-tight-spot.html>.

Hence, Japan is strengthening its defense largely in response to the China threat amid worries about Yonaguni in Okinawa, about 110 km off the east coast of Taiwan, becoming a PLA target, and has increased its rhetoric to enhance support for Taiwan (e.g., economic security cooperation), in alignment with the U.S. position on Taiwan, apart from the buildup of defense capabilities.⁴⁵ However, the reality of a large pacifist Japan militarily engaging with China is complex, and may not have overwhelming public support.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Japan must prepare for all contingencies, including maritime blockade of the Taiwan Strait; improve coordination with allies; and catalyze trade diversification plans so as to support its “reframing” of relations with China.⁴⁷

India’s Growing Defiance

Taiwan is becoming a growing factor in India’s foreign policy due to the former’s economic and technological rising profile amid an increasing threat from the common adversary China. Importantly, their shared commitment to democracy and the rule of law provides a critical convergence of universal values and a strong basis for a mutually beneficial comprehensive relationship. However, their bilateral ties have not reached their true potential, and have remained at the economic trade partnership level primarily to prevent Chinese wrath. China is highly sensitive about Taiwan’s strategic association/collaboration with other nation states, in view of the “One China principle,” which views Taiwan as a province of China.

For India, Taiwan’s historical lack of support for its border dispute with China, as well as India’s compulsions to not cross China’s red line on Taiwan, namely India’s “one China policy” or have ties that stray from the routine (restricted to “interactions in areas of trade, investment, tourism, culture, education and other such people-to-people

⁴⁵ “Japan, Taiwan Ruling Parties to Boost Economic Security Cooperation,” *Kyodo News*, December 24, 2021, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2021/12/4dbc41d8ff48-update1-japan-taiwan-ruling-parties-to-boost-economic-security-cooperation.html?phrase=kyodo>.

⁴⁶ Erin Hale, “Despite Tough Words, Japan Might Not Enter a Taiwan War,” *VOA*, October 16, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/despite-tough-words-japan-might-not-enter-a-taiwan-war/6791868.html>.

⁴⁷ “At 50, Japan-China Friendship Remains a Pipe Dream,” Editorial, *Japan Forward*, September 30, 2022, <https://japan-forward.com/editorial-at-50-japan-china-friendship-remains-a-pipe-dream/>; “Will Russia Use Nuclear Weapons? Putin’s Warnings Explained,” *Reuters*, October 5, 2022.

exchanges”) have proved decisive for long.⁴⁸ India, as a result, has favored the significant economic and developmental partnership (albeit through pragmatic power-parity engagement) with China, despite tensions, over creating geopolitical ripples.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, India’s growing profile following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has compelled both U.S. allies and China to court India – a result of India’s highly adroit, proactive foreign policy comprising a multi- and pointed-alignment vision aimed toward strategic autonomy goals.⁵⁰ This has helped usher in certain key disengagements along the border, a temporary respite from the ever-escalating tensions with China.

Moreover, the growing regional instability and Taiwan’s increasing significance as democratic, technological, economic leverage against China has gradually marked a shift in the Indian approach to Taiwan. For example, Taiwan’s value as the dominant global semiconductor supplier is critical for India’s growth, too, especially as India is looking to build itself as a global semiconductor manufacturing hub. India is relying heavily on a potential free trade agreement (FTA) with Taiwan while a recent \$20 billion semiconductor project between India’s Vedanta and Taiwan’s Foxconn has been signed already.⁵¹

This shift toward acknowledging Taiwan as potent leverage has been part of the overall hardening of India’s China policy, especially after the Galwan crisis in 2020. For example, India has refused to accept China’s overture to compartmentalize border dispute

⁴⁸ “Question No. 1205 People-to-People Contact with Taiwan,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, February 11, 2022, https://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/33511/QUESTION_NO1205_PEOPLETOPEOPLE_CONTACT_WITH_TAIWAN.

⁴⁹ Jagannath P. Panda, “Narendra Modi’s China Policy: Between Pragmatism and Power Parity,” *Journal of Asian Public Policy* vol. 9, no. 2 (March 31, 2016): 185–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17516234.2016.1165334>; “Joint Statement between the Republic of India and the People’s Republic of China on Building a Closer Developmental Partnership,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, September 19, 2014, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24022/Joint+Statement+between+the+Republic+of+India+and+the+Peoples+Republic+of+China+on+Building+a+Closer+Developmental+Partnership>.

⁵⁰ Jagannath Panda, “Negotiation and Negation: India’s Post-Galwan Diplomacy Vis-à-Vis China,” *South Asian Voices*, May 25, 2021, <https://southasianvoices.org/negotiation-and-negation-indias-post-galwan-diplomacy-vis-a-vis-china/>; Ravi Buddhavarapu, “India Is in a Sweet Spot, Courted by the Quad, China and Russia,” CNBC, March 24, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/24/india-is-in-a-sweet-spot-courted-by-the-quad-china-and-russia.html>.

⁵¹ “India’s Vedanta, Taiwan’s Foxconn Sign \$20 Bln Gujarat Semiconductor Chip Deal,” *Al Arabiya*, September 13, 2022, <https://english.alarabiya.net/business/technology/2022/09/13/India-s-Vedanta-Taiwan-s-Foxconn-sign-20-bln-Gujarat-semiconductor-chip-deal>; Pritam Bordoloi, “Free Trade Agreement with Taiwan Could Boost India’s Semiconductor Ambitions,” *Analytics India*, October 12, 2022, <https://analyticsindiamag.com/free-trade-agreement-with-taiwan-could-boost-indias-semiconductor-ambitions/>.

and regional cooperation; continued to highlight the abnormality along the border, and hence in ties; pointed at the need for China to have an “independent” India policy; and resisted any reiteration of the use of “one China” policy in its official statements owing to the lack of reciprocity from China in accepting India’s unofficial stance on “One India.”⁵²

Post China’s escalation of the Taiwan crisis (labeled widely as the Fourth Taiwan Crisis) in August 2022, which destabilized the atmosphere in the Indo-Pacific at large, India has been cognizant of the “militarization” of the Taiwan Strait. In a rare reference with respect to Taiwan, India called out China for its coercive and dangerous “attitude,” in response to an article by a Chinese diplomat that linked a recent Chinese ship docking at Hambantota to Taiwan Strait militarization.⁵³ Already, post the Pelosi visit, India had issued a nondescript but stern statement on recent Cross-Straits’ developments criticizing unilateral actions that alter the regional status quo.⁵⁴

China’s prospective invasion of Taiwan, whether peaceful or violent, will completely destroy the already poor level of confidence between India and China and could lead to a low-level confidence between the militaries. China’s most recent white paper on Taiwan stipulates that Taiwan’s status as a “special administrative region” following reunification would be conditional under the “One China” principle, in that “Two Systems is subordinate to and derives from One Country.” This release has given Xi’s potential reunification plans a boost.⁵⁵ Therefore, as a deterrence measure or leverage, it is incumbent on India, as well as other Indo-Pacific partners, to put in place clear policies vis-à-vis Taiwan, and certainly re-evaluate the “One China policy” should India and China themselves engage in another bloody conflict along the border.

⁵² “Transcript of Special Briefing by External Affairs Minister on Meeting with Foreign Minister of China,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, March 25, 2022, https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/35076/Transcript_of_Special_Briefing_by_External_Affairs_Minister_on_Meeting_with_Foreign_Minister_of_China_March_25_2022; “Why Beijing Must Link One-China Policy with One-India Policy,” *Economic Times*, August 9, 2022, <https://cio.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/news/government-policy/why-beijing-must-link-one-china-policy-with-one-india-policy/93456434?redirect=1>.

⁵³ Ananth Krishnan, “In a First, India Refers to ‘Militarisation’ of Taiwan Strait by China,” *The Hindu*, August 28, 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/in-a-first-india-refers-to-militarisation-of-taiwan-strait-by-china/article65821313.ece>.

⁵⁴ “Transcript of Weekly Media Briefing by the Official Spokesperson,” Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, August 12, 2022, https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/35635/Transcript_of_Weekly_Media_Briefing_by_the_Official_Spokesperson_August_12_2022.

⁵⁵ “China Releases White Paper on Taiwan Question, Reunification in New Era,” Xinhua, August 10, 2022, https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/whitepaper/202208/10/content_WS62f34f46c6d02e533532f0ac.html.

At the same time, India does not see a true parallel between the Ukraine war and the Taiwan flashpoint, primarily because it believes that superimposing concerns of one region over another is “misleading.”⁵⁶ Indian Minister for External Affairs S. Jaishankar has been unambiguous about reiterating that “both are products of very complex histories of that particular region.”⁵⁷ Hence, for India, even on broad grounds, the post-Soviet dynamics between Russia and Europe/the West and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) cannot be equated with the events in Chinese history even though Asia was impacted by the post-Cold War developments.

Moreover, Jaishankar has clearly noted that Ukraine is not a “precedent” for China’s actions in Taiwan, because of historical reasons as well as evolving geopolitical shifts and challenges such as the intensifying rivalries.⁵⁸

Role of the Quad: A True Cohesive Indo-Pacific Framework?

For a long while, even as Taiwan’s security has been hanging in the balance and precariously dependent on China’s whims and the China-U.S. equation, there has been no consensus among the Indo-Pacific states to question, let alone cross, the China-mandated “red line.”⁵⁹ The same has been true for the Quad despite its shared concerns on China and emphasis on maintaining the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific, including the rule of law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

However, despite the questions over parallels and the Quad’s dissonance over Russia, the Ukraine war has accelerated the need to examine the security architecture in the Indo-Pacific and the importance of better coordination and communication among partners.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, there is little hope that the Taiwan question will be formally/directly addressed by the Quad as a whole. What is hopeful though is the shifting

⁵⁶ “Ukraine Crisis Has Its Roots in Post-Soviet Politics: Jaishankar,” *The Indian Express*, February 23, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/ukraine-crisis-has-its-roots-in-post-soviet-politics-jaishankar-7786688/>.

⁵⁷ “Ukraine Crisis Has Its Roots in Post-Soviet Politics: Jaishankar”

⁵⁸ “Raisina Dialogue 2022: Conference Report,” Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, April 2022, <https://www.kas.de/documents/264392/264441/Raisina+Dialogue+2022+Conference+Report+1.pdf/f0c0feff-7fe0-0f94-bf8e-efdfe8c75f56?t=1654662546202#:~:text=S.,in%20India%20and%20the%20EU.>

⁵⁹ Jagannath Panda, “Will the Quad Evolve and Embrace Taiwan?” *The National Interest*, February 17, 2021, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/will-quad-evolve-and-embrace-taiwan-178351>.

⁶⁰ Jagannath Panda, “Quad: Divided over Ukraine, United in the Indo-Pacific?” *The National Interest*, March 18, 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/quad-divided-over-ukraine-united-indo-pacific-201243>.

(hardening) stances of all four states in the face of increasing Chinese assertiveness and the Quad's repeated focus on the "core" objective of promoting regional stability and prosperity.⁶¹ These aspects highlight that cohesion exists, even if clear policy or consensus on "one China" does not. Thus, if push comes to shove, support to Taiwan will possibly emerge for fear of extended crises in the neighborhood, if not for the island itself. If that does not happen, then the security grouping would be in danger of losing relevance and credibility.

The Ukraine War: A Chinese Test Case?

There must be a certain caution when drawing conclusions on whether or not the Ukraine war benefits China. At least initially, the war in Europe certainly diverted attention away from China's activities in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, while the war has allowed China to push propaganda and disinformation amongst Taiwanese citizens, it does not necessarily bode as a precursor to stronger action by China.⁶² Besides the aforementioned reasons why an imminent invasion is unlikely, China also has to take into account the economic and geopolitical repercussions of taking unilateral military actions that break the sanctity of international laws. For example, it will consider Russia's economic slowdown due to sanctions and isolation in multilateral forums despite tacit support from certain global corners.

Xi is likely using Russia's Ukraine invasion to gauge potential ramifications vis-à-vis his future move on Taiwan. Despite the advanced stage of PLA modernization, Xi might well be considering how his untested military would fare if ordered to invade. Xi and his new loyalty-conscious, combat-oriented Central Military Commission (CMC) would also need to assess carefully what will happen if serious resistance is confronted after seeing the poor, demoralized performance of Russian troops.⁶³

Xi must also be concerned about the effects that severe sanctions would have on his economy should he choose to take strong action on Taiwan, especially as the Chinese

⁶¹ "Joint Readout of Quad Leaders Call," The White House, March 3, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/03/joint-readout-of-quad-leaders-call/>.

⁶² "Ukraine and Taiwan: Parallels and Early Lessons Learned," transcript of an online panel discussion, Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 22, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/ukraine-and-taiwan-parallels-and-early-lessons-learned>.

⁶³ Brad Lendon, "Xi's 'Action Men' Now Lead China's Military. Here's What That Means for Taiwan," CNN, October 27, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/27/china/china-central-military-commission-taiwan-intl-hnk-mic-ml/index.html>.

economy is struggling due to strict COVID-19 lockdowns.⁶⁴

Taking into account Putin's insistence and then denial of the use of nuclear weapons, another question that might draw China's attention is how to successfully employ nuclear deterrence so as to be able to not just instill fear, but also limit the scope of conventional military conflict against the U.S. and its Indo-Pacific allies.⁶⁵

In any case, China is not in a hurry to act on Taiwan, instead choosing to play the cautious and relatively long game. The leaders of China, still a rising power, have good reason to think that time is on their side.⁶⁶ The Chinese economy, which is currently the second largest in the world and the largest in the Indo-Pacific, has profited greatly over the past three decades from the structure of the existing international economic and security system. China's efforts to change the international order have largely involved working via existing international institutions and constructing supplemental ones that it can control, which is building up rather than dismantling, in stark contrast to Russian behavior.⁶⁷

Moreover, as Xi returns to an unprecedented third term, it becomes all the clearer that despite the central focus assigned to reunification, he is unlikely to act unless sure of victory to cement his political power. The roles that the UN, as well as the "like-minded" partner-states of the U.S., namely the European Union, India, Japan, and Australia, would play in a full-scale Taiwan conflict will have to be individually as well as collectively assessed by Xi before making any move.⁶⁸

This begs the question: Is Beijing then taking a backseat on Taiwan? It seems unlikely, though at the maximum what can be ascertained is that China is probably biding time.

⁶⁴ Frank Tang, "How Much Is China's Economy Struggling and How Much Worse Can It Get?" *South China Morning Post*, November 2, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/economy/china-economy/article/3198040/how-much-chinas-economy-struggling-and-how-much-worse-can-it-get>.

⁶⁵ "Joint Readout of Quad Leaders Call," The White House, March 3, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/03/joint-readout-of-quad-leaders-call/>.

⁶⁶ Shane Mason, "Taiwan Is Not Ukraine: Stop Linking Their Fates Together," *War on the Rocks*, January 27, 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/01/taiwan-is-not-ukraine-stop-linking-their-fates-together/>; Kinling Lo and Kristin Huang, "Xi Calls for Unity, Resilience as He Sets out China's Vision for next 30 Years," *South China Morning Post*, January 12, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3117314/xi-jinping-says-time-and-momentum-chinas-side-he-sets-out>.

⁶⁷ Nadège Rolland, "China's Eurasian Century? Political and Strategic Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative," National Bureau of Asian Research (May 23, 2017), <https://www.nbr.org/publication/chinas-eurasian-century-political-and-strategic-implications-of-the-belt-and-road-initiative/>.

⁶⁸ Jagannath P. Panda, "Examining the Roles of the UN, Europe, and the US If China Invades Taiwan," *Global Taiwan Brief* vol. 7, no. 7 (April 6, 2022), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/04/examining-the-roles-of-the-un-europe-and-the-us-if-china-invades-taiwan/>.

Beijing seems inclined to opt for “incremental” militarism, rather than a sudden military attack. The strategy of occupying the outlying islands in the wider South China Sea or in the Taiwan Strait, and then going for a full-scale military occupation, seems a most plausible military scenario.⁶⁹

The various likely or unlikely scenarios and debates notwithstanding, China’s calculus vis-à-vis a “forceful” occupation of Taiwan is an evolving policy, which must be assiduously monitored. In this context, it is imperative to gather regular bona fide intelligence on Chinese postures and tactics in its wider neighborhood and review China’s evolving perspectives on Russia’s fate in Ukraine in the coming months. At the same time, the Indo-Pacific partners must focus on the positives in their bilateral and multilateral ties and coalesce better to first and foremost improve their communication gap. In the absence of a proper security architecture, any potential or apparent weak link is liable to be exploited by China to the whole region’s disadvantage, not just Taiwan’s.

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⁶⁹ Based on the authors’ interactions and observations with many maritime and military experts. Some have also argued with a similar line of thinking. For example, see Ted Galen Carpenter, “China Could Start a Mini ‘Island War’ with Taiwan,” Cato Institute, August 8, 2022, <https://www.cato.org/commentary/china-could-start-mini-island-war-taiwan>.