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By: John Dotson

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Throughout 2020 and 2021, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has directed increasing military provocations against Taiwan in both the [air](#) and [sea](#) domains, with both [nationalist press outlets](#) and [government spokespersons](#) touting these military operations as proof of Beijing's will and readiness to go to war over Taiwan. Amid these provocations, Republic of China (ROC) military planners in Taiwan have continued their efforts to upgrade the island's defense capabilities, through both indigenous weapons development and the purchase of advanced weapons systems from abroad. Some of the most prominent steps taken in this direction over the past two years have been the purchase of [66 F-16C/D Block 70 aircraft](#) from the United States in 2019; the commencement of an [indigenous diesel submarine program](#); and the April 2021 [commissioning](#) of the indigenously built amphibious transport dock *Yushan* (玉山), a 10,600 ton, multi-mission amphibious ship intended for service with the ROC Navy.

However, less attention has been given over the past two years to the efforts by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND, 中華民國國防部) to develop or purchase more advanced tactical missile systems. While these efforts draw fewer headlines than the acquisition of bigger-ticket weapons platforms, they have major implications for the ROC military's ability to maintain a credible defensive capability in the face of a cross-strait military balance tilting ever-more in favor of the PRC. [1] The past month saw multiple developments in this direction, including test launches of indigenous, Taiwan-built missiles, as well as public discussions of potential new purchases of tactical missile systems from the United States.

Indigenous Missile Developments

Taiwan's defense establishment has worked for decades to develop its own advanced,

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indigenous missile systems, with many of these research and development efforts centered in the [National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology](#) (NCIST, 國家中山科學研究院) located in Taoyuan. Currently, Taiwan's most prominent indigenously built missile platforms are:

- *Air defense:* Taiwan's leading indigenous air defense platform is the *Tien-Kung* (TK, 天弓), or "Sky Bow," family of surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems. The variants in active service are the [TK-II](#), a medium-range anti-aircraft missile with an active seeker for terminal guidance; and the [TK-III](#), a solid fuel, hypersonic surface-to-air missile with a terminal microwave seeker, which is designed to serve both anti-aircraft and anti-ballistic missile roles. NCIST maintains a long-term contract (2015-2024) to provide *Tien Kung* missiles to the MND; press reporting in early April indicated that NCIST had [delivered 23 TK-III missiles to the MND](#), thereby fulfilling its quota for the year.
- *Air-to-air:* One of the primary indigenous air-to-air anti-aircraft weapons employed by the ROC Air Force is the *Tien Chien* (TC-II, 天劍-II), or "Sky Sword" missile. The [TC-II](#) is a beyond visual-range, active radar seeker missile that NCIST describes as having "performances in the class of the AM-RAAM." [2]
- *Anti-ship:* Taiwan's most prominent indigenous naval weapons come from the *Hsiung Feng* (HF, 雄風), or "Brave Wind," series of anti-ship missiles. The most advanced of these is the [HF-III](#), a sea-skimming, ramjet propulsion missile with an active radar seeker, reportedly deployed on Cheng Kung (成功)-class guided missile frigates and Jin Chiang (錦江)-class corvettes of the ROC Navy.

Throughout the month of April, Taiwanese weapons technicians reportedly conducted a series of test launches of Taiwan's indigenous systems at Jiupeng Military Base (九鵬基地), a [major site for weapons testing](#) located near the southern tip of Taiwan. This reportedly included a [high-altitude test launch](#) of a *Hsiung Feng-II* missile, the [launch](#) of a *Tien Kung-III* missile, and a [possible test-firing](#) of the [Ray-Ting 2000](#) ("Thunderbolt 2000," 雷霆2000) multiple rocket artillery system. In early April, two People's Liberation Army Navy

(PLAN) vessels—a frigate and a possible electronic surveillance ship—were reportedly located [patrolling in the vicinity of Orchid Island](#) (蘭嶼) to the southeast of Taiwan's main island, possibly to observe and conduct collection operations against the test launches.



Hsiung-Feng III ("Strong Wind-III") anti-ship missile. (Image source: [NCSIST](#))

Purchases of New Missile Systems from the United States

The years [2019](#) and [2020](#) were both significant years for US arms sales to Taiwan, as the Trump Administration opened up a process that for many years had been constrained under both the Bush and Obama Administrations due to concerns of damaging ties with Beijing. Overall, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced twelve different arms sales packages to Taiwan between April 2019 and the end of 2020, with no new purchases officially announced thus far in 2021. [3]

Among these twelve arms sale packages, five were for missile and/or long-range artillery systems:

- July 2019: DSCA announced the intended sale of 250 [Block I-92F Stinger missiles](#) and four Block I-92F Stinger Fly-to-Buy missiles, with associated support equipment, for an estimated cost of USD \$223.56 million. Stinger missiles are man-portable, shoulder-mounted systems for targeting lower-altitude aircraft.
- July 2020: DSCA announced an estimated USD \$620 million package of services and equipment for Taiwan's [Patriot Advanced Capability \(PAC-3\) missile recertification program](#). The PAC-3 is a surface-to-

air missile system designed for both anti-aircraft and anti-ballistic missile roles.

- October 2020: DSCA announced the intended sale of 135 [AGM-84H Standoff Land Attack Missile Expanded Response \(SLAM-ER\) Missiles](#) and related equipment, for an estimated cost of USD \$1.008 billion. SLAM-ER is an air-launched missile intended for long-distance strikes against ground and/or surface targets.
- October 2020: DSCA announced the intended sale of 11 [High-Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems \(HIMARS\)](#) systems, with associated munitions and support equipment, for an estimated cost of USD \$436.1 million. HIMARS is a vehicle-mounted system intended for strikes against ground targets.
- October 2020: DSCA announced the intended sale of 100 Harpoon Coastal Defense Systems (HCDS) consisting of up to 400 [RGM-84L-4 Harpoon Block II Surface Launched Missiles](#), for an estimated cost of USD \$2.37 billion. The Harpoon, long in service with the US and allied navies, is an anti-ship missile with multiple air, surface, and submarine-launched variants. The RGM-84L-4 is a surface-to-surface variant, and the [sales package included associated vehicles and launchers](#) for use of these missiles in a land-based, coastal defense role.

Taiwanese officials have recently indicated intent to pursue further missile purchases from the United States. In December 2020, ROC Air Force Chief of Staff Huang Chih-wei (黃志偉) indicated that the government [planned to purchase](#) additional PAC-3 missiles in 2021, without publicly stating the number or cost. On April 19, Li Shih-Chiang (李世強), director of the MND Department of Strategic Planning (戰略規劃司), offered [testimony](#) before the Legislative Yuan in which he indicated that Taiwan was seeking to purchase an undetermined number of AGM-158 Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (JASSM) from the United States, a step that would enhance the ROC Air Force's ability to conduct [long-range strike operations](#).

For their part, US officials have thus far avoided public comment on these potential sales. At an [April 22 press conference](#), State Department spokesperson Ned Price was asked about Li's comments, and responded that the US commitment to Taiwan's security was "rock sol-

id," while avoiding specific comment about the AGM-158 or other potential weapons sales.

Considerations for the Missile Upgrades

General defense considerations aside, three specific factors have increased the focus on missile systems as key components of Taiwan's military hardware. The first of these is the expanded need for longer-range air surveillance and anti-aircraft missile systems in the face of China's increasingly aggressive [aviation sorties](#) in the vicinity of Taiwan. As the number of PLA flights near Taiwan and into Taiwan's declared air defense identification zone (ADIZ) increased in the early months of 2021, the ROC Air Force became increasingly burdened by the need to scramble fighter aircraft in response, with resulting strains on maintenance budgets and pilot training schedules. As a result, Deputy Defense Minister Chang Che-ping (張哲平) [indicated](#) in late March that "land-based missile forces" had become the primary means for Taiwan's military forces to track the PLA aircraft. [4]

The second of these factors is the need for Taiwan's military to field more advanced anti-ship missile systems to offset the PRC's increasingly lopsided advantages in the cross-Strait naval balance. [Commentators in Taiwan](#) have noted the benefits of Block II Harpoons to the island's anti-ship defense capability, in terms of both the missile's maneuverability and improved resistance to electronic countermeasures. Additionally, the April tests show the MND's continuing focus on continuing to improve the capabilities of Taiwan's indigenous HF-II and HF-III systems.

The third of these factors is the potential expansion of the weapons engagement zone around Taiwan, a concept advocated by those who wish for Taiwan's military forces to possess greater capacity to strike concentrations of PLA forces assembling in the Taiwan Strait or along the coastal areas of the PRC. This [greater focus on longer-range strikes](#) is reportedly a key element of the latest edition of the *Quadrennial Defense Review* issued by the MND in March 2021. One weapon [discussed in this context](#) is the [M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System](#) (HIMARS), a truck-mounted field artillery system capable of carrying and launching either six Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GM-LRS/MLRS) rockets or one Army Tactical Missile System

(ATACMS) surface-to-surface missile. The [ATACMS missile](#), with a range of up to 300 kilometers, would offer ROC ground forces an increased capability to strike at PLA units along China's coastal areas—and potentially much further inland, if deployed from Taiwan-controlled islands.

Conclusions

Amid the PRC's steady military build-up, the efforts of Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense to procure more advanced missile systems—via both indigenous production and foreign purchase—show a serious effort to respond (at least in terms of hardware) to a daunting challenge. Taiwan's MND has also shown an adaptive approach to pairing indigenous and US missiles in particular warfare areas (e.g., the *Tien-Kung* and PAC-3 for anti-air and ballistic missile defense, or the Hsiung Feng and Harpoon for anti-surface warfare), in order to leverage the relevant strengths of different systems.

The most striking—and potentially most controversial—aspect of recent acquisitions lies in their applications for longer-range strike warfare. This has been seen most clearly in the purchases of the HIMARS launchers, and the AGM-84H SLAM-ER missiles for deployment on aircraft; as well as the potential acquisition of AGM-158 JASSM missiles. These latter purchases indicate a perceived need to extend the potential engagement zone against PRC forces beyond the immediate sea lanes and landing beaches of the Taiwan Strait, expanding Taiwan's defensive perimeter to the coastal regions of the PRC. While Taiwan's military posture remains entirely defensive in nature, the acquisition of these longer-range strike systems reveals an evolving change in defense thinking—and an additional complication for PLA officers planning for Taiwan invasion or island seizure scenarios.

The main point: Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense is pursuing active efforts to upgrade the island's tactical missile systems, through both foreign purchases and indigenous research and development programs. The acquisition of stand-off strike weapons could open up new dimensions in Taiwan's defense planning by making possible longer-range attacks against PLA platforms and facilities.

[1] Office of the Secretary of Defense, "[Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments In-](#)

[volving the People's Republic of China](#)," Appendix I: China and Taiwan Forces Data (pp. 164-166).

[2] The [AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile](#) (AMRAAM) is a beyond visual-range, active radar seeker missile employed by fighter aircraft of the US military and many US-allied countries.

[3] Author's review of Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) press releases regarding foreign arms sales in 2019 and 2020. See: "[Major Arms Sales](#)," DSCA, multiple dates.

[4] Throughout April, reports on PLA flight incursions issued by the ROC Air Force have typically stated that, in response, "CAP aircraft [were] tasked, radio warnings issued and air defense missile systems deployed to monitor the Activity." See: [ROC Ministry of National Defense](#), multiple dates.

Partners in Disaster Relief: Taiwan, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States

By: Robert D. Eldridge

Robert D. Eldridge, PhD, a former political advisor to the Marine Corps in Japan, is the North Asia director of the Global Risk Mitigation Foundation. He is the author of "Operation Tomodachi" (Reed International, 2018) and translator of "Megaquake" (Potomac Books, 2015).

In March, Taiwan, Japan, the United States, and the United Kingdom issued a joint statement on disaster cooperation at the close of the forum on "[Partners in HADR: Awareness—Resilience—Action](#)." The statement on partnering in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) was issued on the 10th anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake that devastated northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011 and took approximately 20,000 lives. While the joint statement largely flew beneath the radar screen of the international media, this was a momentous step that could be consequential not only for Taiwan's international space but also substantially benefit the region as well.

Taiwan and the United States—both of whom contributed significantly to the response to the 2011 disaster—announced at the event that they would be launching a six month-long series of activities focusing

on disaster cooperation. Notably, the program would come to an end on September 21, the 22nd anniversary of the Chi-Chi Earthquake (集集地震) in central Taiwan's Nantou County, which killed more than 2,400 people—and in the wake of which the Japanese and US governments provided financial support and/or the dispatch of humanitarian teams.

While the details and dates after March 2021 were not fully spelled out in the statement, the series of activities is meant to “expand our already robust cooperation in the HADR space, raise public and international awareness about Taiwan's outsized role in HADR efforts, and support activities that foster personal resilience within Taiwan's communities.”

The first several weeks of activities include workshops on capacity-building between Taiwan and the United States, followed by resilience-building webinars. The first and last sessions will involve Japan and the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, from the statement, many elements of the agreement remain unclear—including who will be invited to speak and to attend, the degree of expertise of the speakers and attendees, the length and scope of the discussions, the method of disseminating the results, and the after-action plans. Nevertheless, it is an important first step.

The statement notes that in addition to seeking expanded bilateral cooperation between Taiwan and the United States, the two countries would “work with Japan, the United Kingdom, and other partners through the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)

and other platforms to share [their] experience and expertise in the field of HADR.”

Disaster response is inherently an international operation. It is not just one nation that is impacted by a disaster, but many. Indeed, a whole region or the world as a whole can be affected. Aside from the humanitarian tragedy, which usually also involves the citizens of other countries who may be working, studying, residing, traveling, or vacationing in the stricken nation at the time, economies and their supply chains are inevitably disrupted and governments and/or first responders are placed under enormous pressures. Thus, deepening and expanding regional and global cooperation, especially in HADR, is vital.

Disasters are not just earthquakes and tsunamis. They can include volcanic eruptions, typhoons, heavy rain and mudslides, and wildfires. Australia recently experienced horrific wildfires, and it is likely that other countries will increasingly see them happen as global temperatures continue to rise, and conditions grow drier. The Philippines, on the other hand, is situated directly in the Pacific Ocean's “Typhoon Alley” and gets hit annually, causing mudslides and devastating floods. Further, it has experienced numerous volcanic eruptions, a challenge shared by Japan and other countries in the region—including Taiwan, which recently determined the Tatun Volcano Group (大屯火山群) and Guishan Island (龜山島) to be active volcanoes, and discovered that Taipei's Yangmingshan National Park (陽明山國家公園) also has a volcanic pulse.



Image: Representatives of participating states, including AIT Director Brent Christensen (center left) and Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu (center right), pose for a photograph at a March 10 meeting in Taipei, in which the participants signed an agreement on cooperation in disaster relief operations. (Image source: [RTI](#))

Two countries that would have made ideal partners in this endeavor from the outset are Australia and the Philippines. Australia, for example, played an important role during Operation Tomodachi—the US-led relief efforts after the March 2011 earthquake in Japan—providing air support and other needed assistance, much like they did 65 years before in the aftermath of the Showa Nankai Earthquake and Tsunami of 1946. [1]

Similarly, the Philippines, with its wealth of experience in responding to disasters and community resilience at the local level, has much to teach Japan. I especially noticed the Philippines’ potential following one of several international workshops I took part in there on behalf of the Japan-based international non-governmental organization, the [Asia-Pacific Alliance on Disaster Management](#) (APAD), for which I served as an advisor. (APAD is a six-country partnership that responds quickly—in most cases faster than the host governments can—to disasters using its public-private partnerships and networks. While not an official member, Taiwan also has close ties with APAD.) Touring southern Luzon and meeting with local citizens, non-profit organizations (NPOs), and officials, I saw how the Philippines was clearly ahead of Japan in many areas in terms of developing local resiliency and expertise.

For these and other reasons, I recommended shortly after the Kumamoto Earthquake (April 2016) that important islands, as well as airfields and ports along the First Island Chain, be made into disaster response hubs whose use could be shared by Japan, the United States, the Philippines, and Taiwan. The Japanese version of the proposal was published by the *Sankei Shimbun* (in June 2016) and the [English version](#) followed in the *Taipei Times* in May 2019.

These proposed hubs would start at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni (Yamaguchi Prefecture, Japan) and continue along the Maritime Self-Defense Force’s Kanoya Air Base (Kagoshima Prefecture), followed by Amami Airport (also in Kagoshima), Marine Corps Air Station Futenma (Okinawa Prefecture), Shimoji Shima Airport (also in Okinawa), a location in northern Taiwan, a location in southern Taiwan, Clark International Airport in the Philippines—which already has the state-of-the-art Emergency Operations Center of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation—and a second location in the southern Philippines (perhaps in Mindanao or a re-

constructed Marawi City). The hub concept could even extend to Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia, which also experience natural disasters and are vulnerable to the effects of regional disaster events.

In recent years, disasters have become so large and destructive in scale that one nation cannot deal with a tragedy by itself; collaboration across sectors and nations has become increasingly crucial. I stressed that the earlier these hubs were established—the space for them already exists—the earlier the habits of cooperation could begin.

I have argued, as well, that the hub concept would help Taiwan’s international and regional standing as it engages at the forefront of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. In this regard, the initiative taken by Taiwan and the United States as “Partners in HADR” is undeniably worthy of praise. Notably, the collaboration grew out of GCTF, a platform established in June 2015 by Taiwan and the United States to “utilize Taiwan’s strengths and expertise to address global issues of mutual concern.”

Because Taiwan is so advanced in so many different areas, we can speak of a “[Taiwan Model](#),” as American Institute in Taiwan Director W. Brent Christensen did at the series launch workshop on March 10.

Over the past six years, Taiwan, led by President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文)—[recognized](#) as one of last year’s most influential female leaders—has successfully battled COVID-19, and [hosted approximately 30 workshops](#) on women’s empowerment, public health, law enforcement cooperation, cybersecurity, media literacy, e-commerce, and HADR, which have seen more than 1,800 people from 70 countries participate. Under the GCTF, Taiwan and the United States will [co-host the training programs](#). Not only does this allow for the enhancement of multilateral cooperation and the strengthening of capacity building, but it will facilitate Taiwan’s ability to develop partnerships with other countries and expand its international presence.

There is no better field to do this in than HADR, an area all countries have to improve upon as we prepare for whatever future disaster, natural or man-made, awaits us. As was made clear in an earlier Global Taiwan Institute report (“[Taiwan’s Disaster Preparedness and Response: Strengths, Shortfalls, and Paths to Im-](#)

[provement](#)") by disaster expert and former US Federal Emergency Management Agency official Leo Bosner, even Taiwan has much to learn. By hosting this series of events, Taiwan is showing that it wants to learn and improve, and to do so with others.

It will be exciting to see the results of the series of activities, including the final report following the last session in September, entitled "Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters." Hopefully this series will become a recurring event, and the number of participating countries—currently 35—grows.

The main point: Building on the successful Global Cooperation and Training Framework, Taiwan and the United States recently launched a new initiative in the area of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, which will also involve Japan and the United Kingdom. This will not only grow the international space for Taiwan, but also deepen the level of expertise in Taiwan and the region. This should not only become a recurring event, but other ways to expand Taiwan's role in this field should also be explored—such as through shared disaster response hubs and involving more countries in the co-hosting of the training program.

[1] Eldridge, Robert D. *Before Operation Tomodachi: Four Cases of Bilateral Disaster Cooperation and American-Japanese Friendship in Postwar Japan*. Reed International, 2018.

NATO's Pivot Towards the Quad: Implications for Taiwan

By: Christina Lin

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At a recent [NATO](#) foreign ministers meeting, the United States and European countries agreed to step up cooperation in order to address the impact of China's military rise on alliance security. At the same time, [Taiwan](#) is also increasingly seeking to expand its ties with the Quad grouping, which consists of the United States, Australia, India, and Japan. In response, the group is [exploring](#) a "[Quad plus Taiwan](#)" format in the Indo-Pacific region, while [European countries](#) are simultane-

ously considering joining a "Quad Plus" framework that overlaps with the "NATO Plus" framework.

"NATO Plus" and "Quad Plus" in the Indo-Pacific

Given that the United States, Japan, and Australia are already NATO members and global partners, some scholars have proposed sending [NATO observers](#) to the Quad's joint military exercises. NATO countries have already regularly participated in Rim of the Pacific ([RIMPAC](#)) exercises, hosted by the US Pacific Fleet. Held biennially in Hawaii, the RIMPAC exercises are currently the world's [largest](#) international maritime exercise and feature a variety of participants, including China—which joined in [2014](#) and [2016](#), but was disinvited in [2018](#) due to its military activities in the South China Sea.

With the overlapping of "NATO Plus" and "Quad Plus" frameworks, this provides an opportunity for [European countries](#) to expand their cooperation with partners in the Indo-Pacific. Already in April 2021, France organized the [La Pérouse](#) naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal with the participation of all four [Quad](#) countries. While the declared mission of the exercise was to enhance interoperability for crisis management, Pankaj Jha, former deputy director of India's National Security Council Secretariat, stated that the larger aim is to build a "trilateral France-Australia-India mechanism and [Quad plus France](#) in the Indian Ocean." Jha, now a professor of defense and strategic studies at O.P. Jindal Global University, also added that "France has been aware of the fact that Chinese have been making [certain under sea moves](#) [scavenging for minerals and resources], particularly in French territories in the Indian Ocean, so they wanted [to do something that] acts as a deterrent and also as a collaborative effort."

Indeed, as a former colonial power, Paris considers itself a "[resident](#)" in the Indo-Pacific, and [French territories](#) in the region encompass more than 11.7 million square kilometers. These include the French Southern and Antarctic lands in the southern Indian Ocean, French Polynesia, and Clipperton Island in the Pacific Ocean, thus giving Paris "one of the world's largest [Exclusive Economic Zones](#) (EEZ)." The territories are also home to [8,000 soldiers](#) and 1.5 million French people, underscoring France's position as a key stakeholder in Indo-Pacific stability and prosperity.

Likewise, Germany has also become increasingly assertive in the region, partnering with Japan to hold their first “[2 plus 2](#)” dialogue of foreign and defense ministers in April. Berlin also plans to [send a frigate](#) to Asia in August, which will become the first German warship to cross the South China Sea since 2002. The United Kingdom, a fellow NATO member, is following suit, with plans to [send the British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth](#) to the Indo-Pacific region in May of this year as part of a post-Brexit “[Global Britain](#)” strategy that aims to expand the British maritime presence “[east of the Suez](#).” Similarly, the [Netherlands](#) is seeking to align its Indo-Pacific vision with India, which could eventually pave the way for a broader [EU approach](#) towards the region.

However, NATO and EU members are not the only countries pivoting to the Indo-Pacific. Middle Eastern countries such as Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are also eyeing the “Quad Plus” framework.

Eyeing the China-Iran Axis

One of the key drivers for this emerging NATO and “Quad Plus” coalition appears to be the [China-Iran axis](#). On March 27, China and Iran signed a [25-year strategic cooperation agreement](#) to enhance their military and economic ties. First proposed in 2016 and finalized last year, the agreement has rattled Israel and Arab Gulf states concerned with a nuclearizing Iran. Coupled with the growing number of Asian countries wary of a rising China, “NATO Plus” and “Quad Plus” partners are upgrading their security ties.

As such, a recent *Jerusalem Post* [article](#) observed that France is taking a leading role to define variable-geometry coalitions from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Gulf of Oman and beyond, including proposing naval drills that feature various combinations of states, such as Israel, Cyprus, Greece, the UAE, and Egypt, as well as Quad nations in the Indo-Pacific. For example, after leading the La Pérouse naval exercise with the Quad in early April, France continued to lead the [Varuna trilateral naval exercise](#) with India and the UAE in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman from April 25 to 27. According to a former Indian Navy western commander, the [aim of the Quad-Plus](#) maritime force is to engage in cooperative security from the Indo-Pacific to the Gulf of Aden. Quad members already have a regular

presence in the Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations, with US, [Japanese](#), and French military bases in Djibouti augmenting the Quad-Plus force.

France is thus working to coordinate NATO’s Asian partners—including India—with NATO’s partners in the Middle East. These countries are grouped into two organizations: the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative ([ICI](#)) (composed of four Arab Gulf states, the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar) and the Mediterranean Dialogue ([MD](#)) (comprised of Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia). As the country most threatened by Tehran, and therefore also [potentially threatened by the new China-Iran axis](#), MD partner Israel is increasingly seeking to establish dialogue between the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the US Central Command (CENTCOM), and the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) focused on countering shared threats, as well as establishing a strategic dialogue with the Quad and other stakeholders in the Indo-Pacific region. Israel had already made its debut in the Indo-Pacific region back in 2018, when it joined the [RIMPAC](#) exercise along with other NATO members and Asian partners. While the country was invited again to [RIMPAC 2020](#), it decided not to participate due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 19, 2021, US Representative Scott Perry (R-PA) proposed a bill in Congress to [include Taiwan](#) in the “NATO Plus” framework. The “[Taiwan PLUS Act](#)” posits that support for defense cooperation with Taiwan is critical to US national security, and recommends that Taiwan be included in the “NATO Plus” group. This grouping is drawn from 17 countries—including Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, and Israel—designated as [Major Non-NATO Allies](#) (MNNA). [1] The designation provides certain privileges in defense and security cooperation, but does not entail any explicit security commitments to the member nations.

As former NATO policy chief [Fabrice Pothier](#) recommended, dialogue and consultations should happen more regularly at a political level, “even if informally behind closed doors—with those Asian countries most exposed to Chinese power, starting with Taiwan but also Vietnam, the Philippines, and Singapore.” Meanwhile, Taiwan—also concerned about the China-Iran axis as the country most threatened by Beijing—is keeping track of the “Taiwan Plus Act” and continu-

ing to support efforts to participate in the “Quad Plus” framework.

Remarking on the Taiwan PLUS Act, Legislator [Chen Ting-fei](#) (陳亭妃) of Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨) stated that “Taiwan has become an important partner to other democratic nations at a time when China is aggressively pushing to expand its territory.” Independent Legislator [Freddy Lim](#) (林昶佐) urged that “Taiwan must continue to enhance its military capabilities, and cooperate more with the US, and other friendly nations in the region.”

For Su Tzu-yun (蘇紫雲), senior analyst at the government-funded Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR, 財團法人國防安全研究院) in Taipei, as Taiwan improves its defense capabilities and builds trust with Quad partners, it “can become a [Maritime Israel](#).” Israel and Taiwan are two small democratic allies of the United States with shared values, positioned in the crosshairs of the China-Iran axis, yet lacking the security guarantees provided by formal defense treaties or military alliances. Jerusalem and Taipei would need to punch above their weight and sway public opinion to justify US military support in the event of an attack. As such, Su [commented](#) that “Taiwan must win over public opinion” and demonstrate its willingness to defend itself by improving its defensive capabilities and contributing to regional stability through cooperative security with like-minded states. That way, Su argued, “As a kind of Israel, Taiwan would be worthy of respect and support [...] because Taiwan is capable of protecting itself.” Given this, burden-sharing for regional security through “Quad Plus” and “NATO Plus” arrangements may be the start.

The main point: Taiwan is gaining prominence as a potential member in the “NATO Plus” and “Quad Plus” frameworks, as security partners from the Mediterranean to the Indo-Pacific form coalitions to address the China-Iran axis.

[1] While Taiwan has not received the formal designation, it has been treated as a *de facto* MNNA since [2002 legislation](#) declared that “for purposes of the transfer or possible transfer of defense articles or defense services under the Arms Export Control Act [...] the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 [...] or any other provision of law, Taiwan shall be treated as though it were designat-

ated a major non-NATO ally.”

Internationalizing Security in the Taiwan Strait

By: Michael Mazza

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Relations among the United States, Taiwan, and China have often been described as a triangle. It is difficult to discuss any particular dyad—US-Taiwan, US-China, or Taiwan-China—without at least recognizing the presence of a third side. This framing has always been an oversimplification, but it is a useful one, perhaps no more so than when considering the security domain. US-Taiwan security ties exist largely due to China’s threat to Taiwan. American policies significantly shape cross-Strait security dynamics. American and Chinese mutual threat assessments are driven in large part by each country’s posture *vis-à-vis* Taiwan. A time may finally be coming, however, when it will be appropriate to retire the triangle metaphor.

What Has Changed?

The United States has never been the only country beyond the Taiwan Strait with an interest in maintaining stability there. But for at least the last four decades, the rest of the world was more than happy to let Washington take responsibility for keeping the peace. This was reasonable. Until fairly recently, the cross-Strait military balance favored Taiwan and there was arguably no Sino-American military balance worth speaking of, with American military capabilities vastly superior to those of the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). War was thus unlikely.

That favorable distribution of military power no longer holds. Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense (MND, 中華民國國防部) [assesses](#) that the PLA can already seize offshore islands, achieve air superiority within the first island chain (a string of island nations enclosing the East and South China Seas), carry out air and maritime blockades of Taiwan, target Taiwan with increasingly

lethal and accurate ballistic and cruise missiles, and significantly complicate foreign intervention in the event of a cross-strait conflict. US [Department of Defense](#) and [Defense Intelligence Agency](#) assessments likewise paint a picture of an increasingly capable PLA. Describing US war games about the Taiwan Strait, RAND's David A. Ochmanek told [Real Clear Investigations](#) that the United States (Blue Team) has "had its ass handed to it for years [...] For years, the Blue Team has been in shock because they didn't realize how badly off they were in a confrontation with China."

Over the past five years, Beijing has launched an unrelenting pressure campaign against Taipei. China has poached diplomatic allies, employed economic leverage, isolated Taipei on the global stage, interfered in Taiwan's democratic processes, and resorted to frequent military intimidation. During the last 15 months, however, Taiwan's ongoing exclusion from the World Health Organization may have led countries around the world to conclude that their own national security interests are harmed by Beijing's cross-strait policies (see, for example, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China's [#LetTaiwanHelp](#) campaign). Meanwhile, near-daily PLA flights into Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ), occasional crossings of the median line, and other military exercises designed to menace Taiwan have raised concerns around the world about stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Those concerns have arisen at a moment when numerous foreign multinational corporations—auto manufacturers in particular—have become acutely aware of their reliance on Taiwan's semiconductor manufacturing sector. Although Taiwan's economy has been an important player in global trade networks for several decades, it has now become a central node in the global economy, especially due to its dominance of the semiconductor manufacturing industry. [92 percent](#) of the world's most advanced chip manufacturing capacity is in Taiwan. In 2020, Taiwan [accounted](#) for 63 percent of global foundry revenue, with Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) alone responsible for 54 percent. TSMC manufactures approximately 50 percent of all semiconductors worldwide. In recent months, however, a demand surge combined with supply disruptions (in Taiwan and elsewhere) has led to a critical

chip shortage. In April, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that "the chip shortage and other supply chain snarls curtailed production by 1.3 million vehicles in the first three months of the year, according to IHS Market."

Automakers, however, are relatively [minor](#) customers for chipmakers. Taiwan's chips power consumer electronics of all kinds, from smartphones to TVs, and from laptops to Internet of things (IoT)-connected devices. If invading extraterrestrials wanted to hobble the global economy, wiping out Taiwan's foundries would be a good place to start. Increased appreciation for Taiwan's centrality in global supply chains is driving greater foreign interest in Taiwan Strait stability.

Japan Steps Up

Last month, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga became the first American and Japanese leaders since 1969 to publicly and [jointly](#) raise concerns about security in the Taiwan Strait. That followed a similar 2+2 [statement](#) following the visit to Tokyo of US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin. During that same visit, Austin and his Japanese counterpart, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi, [agreed](#) "to closely cooperate in the event of a military clash between China and Taiwan," according to *Kyodo News*.

Although some analysts have [suggested](#) that Tokyo is merely reacting to American pressure, there have been internal demand signals in Japan as well. Last December, as the Biden team was gearing up to take office, Japanese Deputy Defense Minister Yasuhide Nakayama [raised concerns](#) about Chinese aggression toward Taiwan. "So far, I haven't yet seen a clear policy or an announcement on Taiwan from Joe Biden," Nakayama told *Reuters*, further stating that "I would like to hear it quickly, then we can also prepare our response on Taiwan in accordance." Nakayama [described](#) "China and Taiwan" as a "red line in Asia" and asked, "How will Joe Biden in the White House react in any case if China crosses this red line?"

In February, Masahisa Sato, who leads the Liberal Democratic Party's Foreign Affairs Division, announced a new "Taiwan project team." According to [Nikkei Asia](#), the team will "discuss policies related to the island and how Japan can coordinate with the US in the security field." Ideas raised in advance of the Taiwan proj-

ect team's first meeting include a Japanese version of America's Taiwan Relations Act and a Japan-Taiwan 2+2 dialogue.

It is difficult to predict where this will all lead. While Japan's business community must be concerned about threats to the semiconductor supply, it is not eager to rock the boat with China; instead, it acts as a [counter-balance](#) to Japan's security hawks. Even so, with the United States looking for its allies to contribute more to collective security—and with elements of the Japanese security apparatus eager to do so—it seems likely that Japan will embrace a more robust role in maintaining cross-Strait peace, even if the contours of that role have yet to be clearly defined.

Mateship and the Taiwan Question

In a podcast recorded in March, the US chargé d'affaires in Australia, Michael Goldman, made a somewhat surprising [admission](#). "And when you look at [allied] strategic planning," he told Australian National University's Rory Medcalf, "it covers the range of contingencies that you've mentioned, of which Taiwan is obviously an important component." Although it is probably safe to assume that such consultations are not new, it is unusual for an American diplomat to discuss them publicly, suggesting either that Canberra is growing comfortable with publicizing its role in the Taiwan Strait or that consultations on Taiwan contingencies have risen closer to the top of the bilateral agenda—or both.

One should be careful not to assign too much importance to a podcast recording by a career Foreign Service Officer (who is not a political appointee). More recent reporting, however, suggests Canberra is indeed watching developments in the Taiwan Strait quite closely. According to the [Australian Financial Review](#), "the Australian government has sharply escalated its internal preparations for potential military action in the Taiwan Strait." Serious defense planning is apparently underway:

"Sources have told AFR Weekend that the Australian Defense Force was planning for a potential worst-case scenario if the United States and China clashed over Taiwan, prompting debate over the scope and scale of Canberra's contribution to what would be an unprecedented conflict in the region.

Options include contributing to an allied effort with submarines, as well as maritime surveillance aircraft, air-to-air refuellers and potentially Super Hornet fighters operating from US bases in Guam or the Philippines, and even Japan."

As in Japan, Australia's business community traditionally acts as an [offset](#) to security hawks, though it has been largely unsuccessful in constraining the Morrison government's approach to China over the last year. Also as in Japan, Australia is responding both to external (i.e., American) and internal demand signals. In the case of both allies, it is true that the United States is seeking more direct cooperation regarding the Taiwan Strait—but it is also true that the United States is knocking on an open door.

Beyond the Pacific Allies

Japan and Australia may be the most forward-leaning of American partners on the security front, but there is also reason to think that their evolving approaches to the Taiwan Strait are leading indicators of where others may head. As Sino-Indian relations have cratered over the last year, India's ties with Taiwan [flourished](#). India may have even [donated](#) COVID-19 vaccines to Paraguay to keep that country from abandoning its diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in pursuit of Chinese vaccines.

Meanwhile in Europe, the European Union has [released](#) its "EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific." The document promises that "the EU will further develop partnerships and strengthen synergies with likeminded partners and relevant organizations in security and defense." The strategy places a particular emphasis on maritime security and indicates that the EU will "assess the opportunity to establish Maritime Areas of interest in the Indo-Pacific." Across the English Channel, the British government has also released a new [strategy document](#) titled *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*. The document includes a section on the United Kingdom's "Indo-Pacific tilt," which describes the region as "critical to our economy, our security and our global ambition to support open societies." The strategy commits the UK to adopt a more active security role in the Indo-Pacific, including by "strengthening defense and security

cooperation” and by enhancing its military presence there.

In both cases, Taiwan goes unmentioned, but it may just be a matter of time until the UK and the EU begin more actively considering whether and how they can contribute to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Given that it is arguably the hottest flashpoint in Asia, continuing to leave that question entirely to others would be a mistake.

The Internationalization of Security in the Taiwan Strait

China, Taiwan, and the United States will undoubtedly remain the dominant players in the Taiwan Strait in the coming months and years. They will not, however, be the only relevant players. This has always been true to an extent—Japan and the United States, for example, included an oblique reference to Taiwan in their [1997 defense cooperation guidelines](#)—but other parties may begin to take on a more prominent role in contributing to cross-Strait stability.

Over the long-term, this internationalization of security in the Taiwan Strait is likely to be a stabilizing factor in the region. China will find it more politically difficult to take action against Taiwan, and there may be more opportunities to redress the cross-Strait military balance—that is, to achieve a more favorable distribution of military power between China on the one hand and the United States and its allies on the other. It might also create more opportunities for Taiwan to diversify its economic partners, thus weakening one aspect of China’s leverage *vis-à-vis* Taiwan. In the meantime, the United States should continue raising Taiwan in bilateral settings with partners and allies and, where feasible, facilitate Taiwan’s deeper engagement with a wide variety of partners around the world.

The main point: China, Taiwan, and the United States will remain the dominant players in the Taiwan Strait, but going forward, they will not be the only relevant players. Over the long-term, this internationalization of security in the Taiwan Strait is likely to be a stabilizing factor in the region.

Post Biden-Suga Summit: Time for Japan to Move Boldly on its Taiwan Policy

By: Tosh Minohara

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As if still repenting for its invasion of China proper more than 84 years ago, postwar Japan has always possessed a certain soft spot toward China. One can make a strong claim that it was Japan’s massive technology transfer and capital infusion in lieu of formal reparations that laid the groundwork for the eventual rise of China. Japan was also the sole G7 nation not to impose sanctions on China in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

Recently [declassified government archival documents](#) clearly indicate the extent to which Japan was committed to ensuring that China would not be forced into a corner by the Western powers. Moreover, even after it became readily apparent that China’s “peaceful rise” rhetoric was a farce, Japan’s leaders still steadfastly stood by China, as they were cognizant of the tremendous economic potential that could be reaped by strengthening Sino-Japanese relations. Thus, until a few years ago, a cohort of scholars in Japan unabashedly advocated a policy of *Nichū-kyōshō*—or Japan-China commercial *entente*—as the best course to pursue. Even in the period just prior to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, these same experts were advocating a policy wherein Japan would place itself squarely between the United States and China, supposedly playing the role of a mediator.

Such thinking is clearly devoid of any understanding of the geostrategic realities surrounding Japan, while also grossly overestimating Japan’s influence. Nevertheless, the concept held a certain appeal, largely because it ignored the reality that Japan was dependent on China for its economic interests while being equally dependent on the United States for its national security interests. Caught between a rock and a hard place—and given Japan’s long-running aversion to conflict—the seemingly ideal solution was for Japan to conveniently occupy the middle ground.

Undeniably, this also was the path of least resistance

for Tokyo to pursue, particularly since many Japanese tend to place limited emphasis on human rights or the erosion of democracy under the current Chinese dictatorship. For instance, the intolerable situation in Xinjiang is seldom viewed as a problem related to Japan, and the death knell of democracy in Hong Kong does not resonate so strongly with many Japanese. Case in point, it has been business as usual for many Japanese conducting business in Xinjiang, eagerly purchasing the cotton produced from the region. Moreover, Japanese financial companies continue to make huge profits from their business ties in Hong Kong, the Asian Sudetenland of our century. Japanese corporations can act in this manner without any reservations, as they possess no fear of a backlash by Japanese consumers in the form of protests and/or boycotts.

Japan's Traditionally Cautious Approach to Dealing with China

Therefore, it came as no surprise when Japan was [conspicuously missing](#) in March from the latest round of sanctions imposed by the cohort of democracies led by the United States, the EU, Britain, and Canada as a response to the harsh Chinese treatment of Uyghurs. As if not sharing values with these countries, Japan resorted to its typical *modus operandi* of expressing its “grave concerns” while also carefully avoiding being drawn into any multilateral action that could antagonize China. In doing so, it became the only G7 member not to back the punitive measures. With the pandemic crippling Japan's economic growth, it can be surmised with a large degree of certainty that Tokyo is counting on a quick rebound—one that will rely mostly on China, both for its trade as well as the massive influx of tourists to Japan.

However, the United States is under new leadership now, and President Joseph Biden is much more interested than his predecessor in shoring up alliances so that they can become a more effective bulwark against Chinese expansionism. As Biden gradually reduces the US military presence in the Middle East, he will undoubtedly shift more of America's weight toward the Indo-Pacific—not merely a pivot, but as an actual turn. Naturally, the most crucial partner in this endeavor will be Japan. The United States can no longer contain China alone, and it will increasingly need like-minded nations to pitch in and form a robust alliance that can

counter Chinese aggressions. Japan, a nation whose very survival hinges on the US-Japan Security Treaty, is cognizant of this reality and thus is cautiously pursuing a balancing act of maintaining solid bilateral relations with the United States while also trying to avoid a rupture with China.

Japan's Relations with Taiwan in the Context of US-Japan Relations

As part of this strategy, Japan does not explicitly name China when expressing its concerns while acting alone. In contrast, however, as the recent [2+2 meeting](#) with the United States has shown, it becomes much bolder and assertive in its statements—to the extent of even singling out China—while holding America's hand. As a matter of fact, the recent joint statement was the first time Japan had directly criticized China by expressing its concerns about Chinese “coercion and destabilizing behavior toward others in the region.” Furthermore, Tokyo took the additional step of including Taiwan in the discussion by reportedly agreeing that the [Japan Self-Defense Forces \(JSDF\) and US forces would cooperate](#) in the event of a military clash between China and Taiwan. This was an unusually bold move for Japan, which has traditionally been timid in engaging Taiwan in this manner, as doing so could trigger the wrath of China, which would in turn lead to economic pain. Understandably, the discussion between the Japanese defense minister and the US secretary of defense was to a large degree symbolic, since under the present Japanese Constitution, the specifics regarding how Tokyo can actually coordinate militarily in supporting Washington amid a China-Taiwan conflict would be up for much legal debate. As such, Japan's official policy continues to be that of encouraging dialogue in order to ease cross-Strait tensions.

Taiwan was among the main points of discussion—along with the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute—when Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide met President Biden in person for the first time in the [summit talks held on April 16](#), and the outcome was essentially a re-hash of the joint statement given after the recent 2+2 meeting. Although the Japanese press made a big deal over the inclusion of “Taiwan” in the post-summit joint statement, the actual phrase was “Taiwan Straits.” Just as the term “Sea of Japan” does not directly refer to “Japan” proper, it is hard to fathom how Taiwan Straits

can be synonymous with Taiwan itself. Clearly, Japan's posture is lacking. As the third largest global economy, which also maintains a well-trained and well-equipped military, Japan must jettison its ingrained "middle-power mentality" and strive to become a greater proactive presence in contributing to regional stability. In order to achieve this, Japan must alter its security identity from that of a perennial "security receiver" to that of a regional "security provider." If human rights do not weigh heavily on the minds of many Japanese, then at least Japan's historical colonial legacy over Taiwan should. Japan possesses a moral obligation to defend Taiwan in times of dire need. It cannot just stand idly by, merely providing logistical or financial support. If such assistance were to be the extent of Japan's support, the Taiwanese public would surely not forget the fact that Japan did not care to shed any blood in defending a neighbor and a fellow democracy.

Japan Should Build Its Security Ties with Taiwan

With this in mind, Japan must begin to earnestly prepare for a worst-case scenario arising in a China-Taiwan showdown with the same amount of vigor and financial resources that it expends in preparing for natural disasters. One important facet of this is to forge more meaningful links, whether formal or informal, between the Japanese military and that of Taiwan. The leading generals and admirals on both sides should be aware of who their counterparts are, as well as what they are thinking. Of course, none of this needs to be made public, and indeed, such interactions already exist to a certain degree. However, these connections must be further expanded and enhanced. For example, a Japan-Taiwan hotline should be established to ensure smooth communication in times of crises.

Second, Japan should pursue a more active public diplomacy campaign to increase awareness of the importance of Taiwan in the minds of its citizens. The geostrategic space that Taiwan occupies just south of the Ryukyu island chain makes it also critical for the security of Japan. Presently, most Japanese perceive Taiwan as a destination for tourists to enjoy its culinary delights and historic sights. Therefore, Japan must clearly convey the message that *Taiwan yūji wa, Nihon no yūji*, or "a war over Taiwan is Japan's war."

Lastly, Japan must start to contemplate the formula-

tion of a Japanese version of the US [Taiwan Relations Act](#). Japan can learn from countries like Australia in this regard by being less rigid when applying the policy of non-recognition of Taiwan. When I was in Guatemala, the accompanying Japanese diplomat refused to enter the Taiwanese embassy with me, citing government regulations. Surely, there could be more flexibility in dealing with such situations, in a similar vein to the recent [US guideline revisions](#) governing its dealings with Taiwan. More importantly, Japan should be much more magnanimous in pressing for Taiwanese inclusion in various international frameworks such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Tokyo should also be more proactive in supporting Taiwan and not shy away from strengthening links as well as bolstering bilateral economic ties. Specifically, this means that Japan should refrain from being parsimonious in linking the prohibition of agricultural products from Japan's North Eastern (*Tōhoku*) region by Taiwan with closer trade relations, as Taipei was firmly against this ballot measure.

The recent fate of Hong Kong should be a clarion call to all of us, signaling what could come next: the subjugation of Taiwan by China. Japan can neither remain aloof to this reality nor act indifferently. It is time for Japan to move ever more boldly, as there is no denying the reality that the fate of both Japan and Taiwan are inextricably intertwined; both win together or lose together.

The main point: Although the current pandemic has greatly altered our regular daily routines, Chinese geostrategic ambitions remain unaffected and unchanged. As such, those in Japan must not only pay attention but also fully prepare themselves for this reality. We must be aware that in a post-COVID world, it is quite likely that dealing with a more belligerent China will emerge as the most vital global security issue. The novel coronavirus has taught us an important lesson about the steep price we pay when we are too slow in recognizing and reacting to potential threats. Let's not make the same mistake again.