



# South Korea's Policy Responses to a PRC Maritime Blockade of Taiwan

Benjamin Sando

March 2025

What role will the Republic of Korea (ROK) play in a Taiwan contingency that falls short of all-out war? While American foreign policy experts have recently advanced the argument that a People's Republic of China (PRC) invasion of Taiwan will likely trigger war between North and South Korea—a “simultaneous conflict”—few have explored how the ROK will respond to a less severe Taiwan crisis, such as a PRC maritime blockade.<sup>1</sup> Such a maritime contingency would have devastating economic consequences for South Korea. Meanwhile, a PRC economic blockade would be unlikely to spur a North Korean attack on the South, especially if the United States refrains from armed engagement with Beijing. With its maritime trade routes blocked, Seoul would have a major incentive to act in the East China Sea and would not have to concentrate its military forces on fighting North Korea. Nonetheless, the ROK's policies in this scenario are largely undefined.

Only a handful of South Korean scholars, such as Lee Taewoo (이태우) and Hwang Taeyeon (황태연) of the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU), have engaged with the issue of a PRC economic blockade.<sup>2</sup> These ROK scholars universally recognize the dire consequences that such a maritime crisis would inflict on the ROK economy. The crisis, however, is defined first and foremost as an alliance management issue with the United

"No matter what immediate policies Seoul adopts in response to a PRC blockade, the existence of a potential maritime crisis is a call to action for major investment in the ROK Navy."

States. The scholars, including Lee and Hwang from KINU or Kim Hyeonseung (김현승) of the ROK Naval Academy, assess that an overstretched United States will seek contributions from Korea and Japan to any maritime operations to counter a PRC blockade of Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> South Korea must then contend with US demands that may exceed its willingness to engage with a PRC-led operation.

A second general theme from ROK scholarship is that a PRC economic blockade of Taiwan is a lose-lose scenario. Even if this blockade were to be defeated without Taiwan-

ese capitulation, an embittered PRC may be tempted to engage in maritime provocations in the ROK's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) west of the Korean Peninsula or around Ieodo (Socotra Rock) in the East China Sea. No matter what immediate policies Seoul adopts in response to a PRC blockade, the existence of a potential maritime crisis is a call to action for major investment in the ROK Navy.<sup>4</sup>

## Potential Taiwan Contingencies

China scholars around the world have identified a range of potential crises of PRC aggression towards Taiwan, ranging in severity. The least severe contingencies encompass major PRC cyberattacks against Taiwanese infrastructure or unilateral declarations of political control of Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> The most severe contingency is a full-scale amphibious invasion of Taiwan by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).<sup>6</sup> At the lowest severity level of Taiwan contingencies, South Korean intervention is unlikely as these crises may not offer sustained interruption to economic stability in East Asia. At the same time, the United States is unlikely to engage in a military confrontation with the PRC in response to such crises. Meanwhile, scholars advancing the “simultaneous conflict” theory suggest that in the event of a full-scale amphibious invasion of Taiwan and a US intervention against China, the ROK is at risk of becoming embroiled in a major conflict with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>7</sup> In such an invasion scenario, Seoul is not expected to intervene in the Taiwan Strait, as it will be forced to commit its resources to battling North Korea.

However, the likelihood of South Korean intervention in a Taiwan crisis does not remain low along the entire spectrum of possible contingencies. There remains a set of “medium severity” Taiwan contingencies that threaten sustained disruption to South Korea's economic stability without instigating major conflict with North Korea. ROK government intervention in the Taiwan Strait is more likely under these scenarios, as the crisis would trigger sustained ROK economic losses—while the United States is unlikely to respond with an armed attack on PRC forces and trigger simultaneous conflict with the DPRK. This spectrum of contingencies is depicted on Figure 1 (*located on the next page*), and includes a PRC economic blockade of Taiwan.

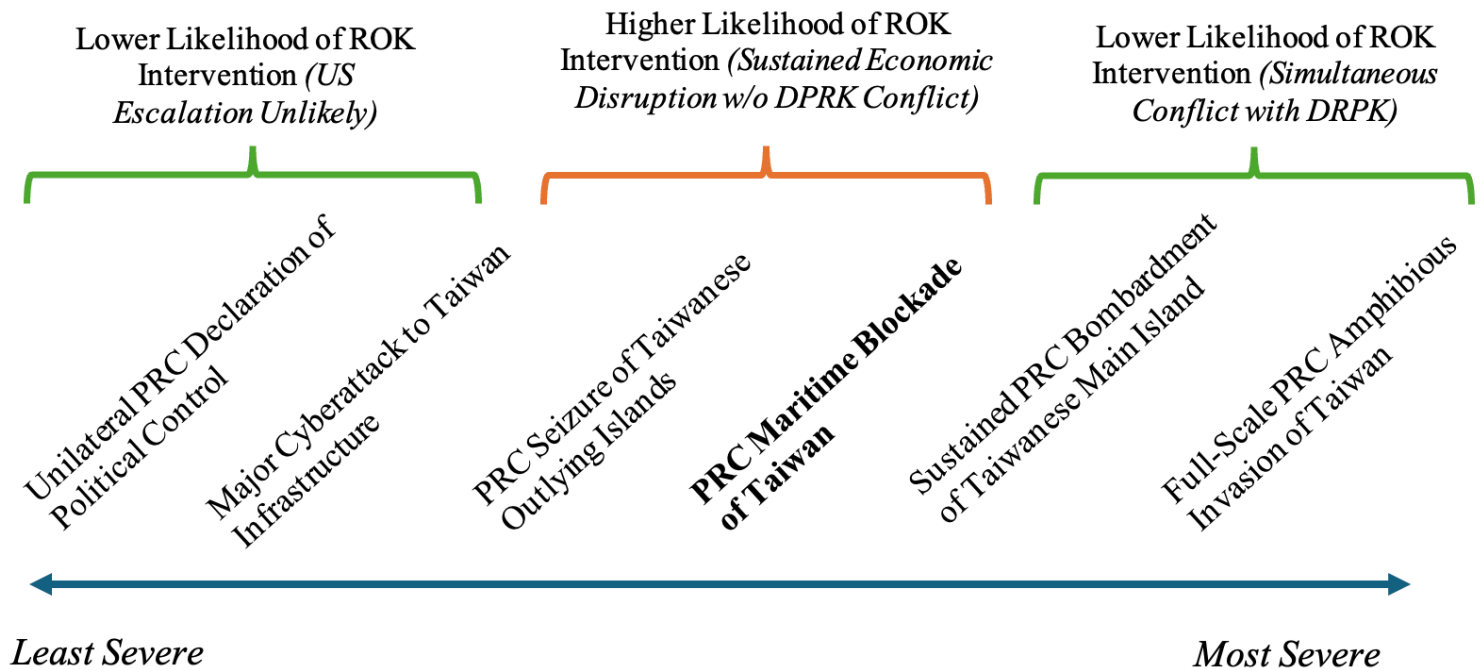


Figure 1: Potential Taiwan Contingencies. (Figure source: Created by author.)

The medium severity contingencies are primarily maritime in nature, in that they involve attempts by the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to coerce Taiwan into submission by denying access to ocean supply routes or other island territories. Scholars have treated a PRC blockade as the most likely maritime contingency related to Taiwan. Lieutenant Commander Marek Jestrab of the United States Navy has argued that a blockade of Taiwan is the most favorable policy to the PRC, as it constitutes “the lowest level of coercive action that could remain below the threshold of open hostilities [while] still achiev[ing] its national objectives.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, a blockade is an effective coercive policy that could force Taiwanese capitulation without triggering all-out war with Taiwan and the United States.

Kim Hyunseung of the ROK Naval Academy partitions potential PRC blockade scenarios into two levels of severity: “low-severity blockades” (‘저강도 봉쇄’) and “high-severity blockades” (‘고강도 봉쇄’).<sup>9</sup> The principal distinction between low- and high-severity blockades is the PRC’s application of anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) assets such as sea mines and submarines to enforce the blockade with lethal action. Low-severity blockades rely on declarative messaging and the use of surface vessels to intercept and divert incoming maritime traffic. High-severity blockades employ anti-access/area denial

assets to destroy vessels that enter the blockade zone.<sup>10</sup>

### Damage to the ROK Caused by a PRC Maritime Blockade

South Korean scholars universally characterize a PRC blockade of Taiwan as an enormous threat to the ROK economy. Kim Hyunseung of the ROK Naval Academy points to Korea’s outsized reliance on maritime trade routes in the East and South China Seas for its energy imports. Some 95 percent of South Korea’s energy imports move through the South China Sea (the stretch of the Pacific Ocean south of Taiwan). Another 30 percent of the ROK’s imported goods arrive through those routes. Even if ROK imports through the South China Sea are delayed by just “two to three days,” the ROK will experience “enormous economic losses.”<sup>11</sup> Lee and Hwang of KINU cite an Economist Intelligence Unit report that found that South Korea is the second-most exposed economy to a disruption of trade routes to and around Taiwan.<sup>12</sup> They further discuss a Bloomberg study which found that South Korea’s economy will likely contract by 12 percent in the event of a PRC blockade of Taiwan.<sup>13</sup> Writing for the Seoul-based East Asia Institute, Hong Jae-Pyo (홍제표) cites a 2022 ROK Navy analysis that estimated Korea will suffer 445 billion KRW (345 million USD) in economic damage for every day that a PRC blockade of Taiwan continues.<sup>14</sup> In light of the economic threat posed by a potential PRC blockade,

the authors call for the ROK government to proactively plan for such a contingency.

## ROK Policies to Mitigate PRC Economic Blockade Damage

Korean scholars articulate a range of ROK government policies for application in the event of a PRC blockade scenario. These policies can be roughly divided into two categories: interventionist and non-interventionist. Interventionist policies are aimed at defeating the PRC blockade of Taiwan and coercing Beijing into halting the operation before it achieves Taipei's capitulation. Non-interventionist policies are designed only to mitigate the disruptions to the ROK's maritime trade routes without halting or slowing the PRC blockade operation. Whether or not the ROK opts for an interventionist or non-interventionist strategy will depend on US demands for alliance cooperation, the policy choices of Japan, and the length of time over which the maritime blockade persists. These factors will be discussed in the section below titled "Factors Influencing ROK Intervention."

### Non-Interventionist Policies

Policy choices outlined in the literature include:

- **Maritime Escorts:** The ROK presently has a destroyer and a special forces unit ("Cheonghae Unit," '청해부대') deployed on escort missions in the Gulf of Aden. The ROK could redeploy this operation to the South China Sea to escort South Korea-bound maritime shipping around the PRC blockade zone near Taiwan. The ROK could double or triple the size of this operation with additional destroyers, forming a "Combined Escort Force" ('합동호송부대').<sup>15</sup>
- **Reflagging ROK-bound Shipping Vessels:** The ROK ranks sixth among all countries for dead-weight tonnage ownership of shipping vessels. However, Korean-owned shipping vessels are often registered under different nations (the ROK ranks only 19<sup>th</sup> for dead-weight tonnage registered under the country's own flag). In the event of a PRC blockade of Taiwan, ROK shipping companies must quickly reflag foreign-flagged vessels to

their own flag. This will ensure that the PRC is aware of the ownership of ROK shipping vessels that are circumventing the blockade area to reach South Korea, and reduce the likelihood that the PLAN will interdict an ROK shipping vessel out of a mistaken assumption it is defying the PRC blockade.<sup>16</sup>

- **Dialogues with Countries along the ROK's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs):** During and prior to a PRC economic blockade, Seoul can establish dialogue groups with countries along the maritime trade routes disrupted by Beijing's operation, such as the Philippines and Indonesia. The goal of these dialogues would be to share best practices for minimizing economic damage from trade disruptions. In regional dialogues, South Korea should prioritize cooperation with Japan and form a "ROK-Japan Shared SLOC Consultation Body" ('한일 공동 해상운송로 협의체'). Meanwhile, the ROK government should form a consultation group with Korean businesses dependent on international trade with the purpose of finding solutions to offset economic losses.<sup>17</sup>

### Interventionist Policies

The below ROK policy recommendations from the literature are roughly ranked by this author in terms of ascending level of provocation to the PRC.

- **Logistical Support:** If the United States is conducting naval operations to counter a PRC blockade of Taiwan through US bases located in South Korea, the ROK military will likely be called upon to provide logistical services to US forces. Services may include airlifts inside South Korea, refueling support, and medical care. This policy is listed as the least provocative since the ROK military is highly integrated with US Forces Korea, and Seoul is unlikely to be able to deny this service if the United States conducts naval operations.<sup>18</sup>
- **Re-flagging/Underwriting Taiwan-bound Shipping:** In cooperation with the United States and like-minded partners (such as Japan), Seoul can provide technical and financial support for attempts to "run the blockade" and send shipping vessels to ports in Taipei. Given that the ROK is the sixth-largest owner of deadweight tonnage of shipping vessels, the ROK can reflag for-

eign-flagged vessels under its ownership so as to reduce the likelihood that the PLAN will sink its vessels. Under this logic, the PRC is more likely to fire upon vessels registered under “flags of convenience”—such as Panama and Liberia—as the PRC may not fear retaliation from these countries—than on vessels registered to the ROK. Meanwhile, since insurance premiums are likely to rise dramatically, the ROK government could contribute to the costly underwriting of vessels sent through the blockade.<sup>19</sup>

- **PRC Sanctions:** Seoul can join like-minded partners in implementing economic sanctions against PRC entities, such as PRC shipping companies, in response to Beijing’s maritime blockade. Sanctions may be implemented for as long as the blockade is perpetuated, encouraging Beijing to terminate the blockade to mitigate economic damage caused by sanctions.<sup>20</sup>
- **Minesweeping:** In light of the US Navy’s diminished sea mine removal capabilities, the ROK (alongside Japan) can contribute its fleet of minesweeping vessels and helicopters to remove sea mines that the PLAN may lay in the course of a blockade. The ROK can employ *Yangyang*-class minesweepers and *Ganggyeong*-class minehunters—as well as aerial minesweeping helicopters due to be operational in 2026—to remove mines around Taiwan. Seoul can scale the provocative-ness of such activity by focusing only on sea mines that are laid on or drift towards the ROK’s SLOCs, before removing mines laid on Taiwan-specific SLOCs.<sup>21</sup>
- **FONOPs:** In response to US requests, the ROK could participate in freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) through the blockade zone determined by the PLAN. By sending military or commercial vessels through the blockade zone—instead of around it—Seoul can send the message that the blockade is invalid and unenforceable, opening opportunities for Taiwan-bound vessels to run the blockade.<sup>22</sup>



*Image: The United States and ROK flags hang from the United States Embassy in Seoul, South Korea (Image source: [Shutterstock](#))*

## Factors Influencing ROK Intervention

South Korean scholars, such as Kim of the ROK Naval Academy, suggest a reluctance on the part of the ROK government to implement interventionist policies in the event of a PRC blockade of Taiwan. Seoul is likely to prefer a non-interventionist strategy and instead focus on protecting Korea-bound maritime traffic in the East and South China Seas.<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, the ROK’s level of intervention beyond that threshold will be chiefly defined by three factors: (1) a negotiation process with its sole treaty ally, the United States; (2) the level of intervention selected by Japan; and (3) the duration of the blockade.

*"Seoul is likely to prefer a non-interventionist strategy and instead focus on protecting Korea-bound maritime traffic in the East and South China Seas."*

### Alliance Management with the United States

South Korean authors characterize a PRC blockade of Taiwan primarily as a crisis of alliance management with the United States. KINU’s Lee and Hwang hypothesize that a US military stretched across two additional conflict areas (Ukraine and the Middle East) will call for interventionist policies from Seoul.<sup>24</sup> Kim points to the inability of the United States to quickly surge its naval

capacity in the Western Pacific beyond the Seventh Fleet. As a consequence, “the United States will seek to employ the US-ROK and US-Japan alliances as much as possible in the event of a confrontation with China.”<sup>25</sup> Given the importance of the US-ROK alliance in deterring North Korea aggression, Seoul has always placed emphasis on satisfying burden-sharing demands made by its ally.<sup>26</sup> Kim writes that “in the event the US requests support forces, the ROK will find it difficult to refuse.”<sup>27</sup>

In this light, the level of intervention would be defined by a negotiation process between the United States and the ROK. During this negotiation process, Seoul must balance an incentive to freeride on US maritime security commitments in the western Pacific with a desire to satisfy the urgent burden-sharing demands of its security guarantor. In such a negotiation, Seoul will seek to restrict its role as much as possible, and avoid kinetic engagements that may place ROK military forces at risk. Kim writes: “while it will be difficult for the ROK to provide warfighting forces such as warships and submarines, it is possible that it can deploy support forces such as minesweepers and auxiliary ships.”<sup>28</sup> Only aggressive negotiation by Washington will likely encourage Seoul to commit warfighting forces.

The level of US engagement to counter a PRC blockade will also significantly influence Seoul’s decision-making calculus. A more provocative response by the United States, such as FONOPs through the blockade zone or attempts to run the blockade with commercial shipping, will leave space for ROK responses that Seoul may have ruled out if Washington’s response was more tepid. If Washington is championing efforts to escort Taiwan-bound vessels running the blockade, Seoul may commit financing to underwrite potential losses or even commits its own navy for escorts.

## The Policies of Japan

Western analysts generally treat Japan as the most likely partner in US efforts to counter a PRC maritime crisis around Taiwan. Indeed, Korean scholars themselves describe the United States and Japan as the two powers expected to respond to such a crisis.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, for the reason that South Korea places high emphasis on satisfying burden-sharing demands made by its security guarantor, Seoul will face enormous internal and external pressures to mount a response to a PRC blockade that

resembles the response of Japan. The policies of Japan are particularly important since the United States views South Korea and Japan as capable of relatively equal burden-sharing alliance commitments. In many ways, this was the essential assumption of the US-ROK-Japan trilateral framework championed by the Biden Administration. Through the trilateral framework, Washington pushed South Korea and Japan to acknowledge a “shared commitment” to tackle security challenges in East Asia, most notably in countering PRC aggression.<sup>30</sup>

Within this context, Seoul will feel great anxiety at being seen to be the “weak link in the chain” in a US-led effort to counter a PRC blockade. If the ROK refuses to replicate more assertive policies executed by Japan, perceptions among conservative American politicians that South Korea is an uncommitted ally will grow, and the Trump Administration may scale down the US force posture in Korea.<sup>31</sup>

“Within this context, Seoul will feel great anxiety at being seen to be the ‘weak link in the chain’ in a US-led effort to counter a PRC blockade.”

Just as aggressive Japanese policies to counter a PRC blockade will force Seoul’s hand, a restrained response by Tokyo will give Korean politicians cover to limit their own actions. Unlike the ROK’s policy making process, a Japanese response to a PRC blockade of Taiwan will hinge on constitutional questions related to the legal use of military force. Due to the restrictions on the use of military force defined by Article 9 of Japan’s constitution, Japan’s actions will depend on how its political leadership legally defines a PRC maritime blockade of Taiwan. As Jeffrey Hornung writes in *Foreign Policy*, Tokyo may opt for the definition that a blockade is a mere “important influence” on Japan’s security.<sup>32</sup> If so, the Japanese prime minister would be able to authorize no more than “noncombat, rear-area support roles” for the Self Defense Forces (SDF). If however, the prime minister defines the crisis as a “threat to Japan’s survival,” he or she can commit the SDF to a combat function. In a RAND Corporation study, Hornung notes that there is no “automatic” definition for the severity of a given crisis; these decisions are “political, resting with the prime minister at any given moment.”<sup>33</sup>

It is challenging to predict how a Japanese prime minister will choose to define a PRC blockade of Taiwan, but the legal stepping stones attached to Japan's constitution offer Tokyo an avenue to resist US pressure to engage with China. If Tokyo opts for a less severe legal definition of the maritime crisis and restrains its response, Seoul will face little incentive to commit forces into combat areas, as it will no longer have to fear being seen as the “weak link in the chain” of an allied response.

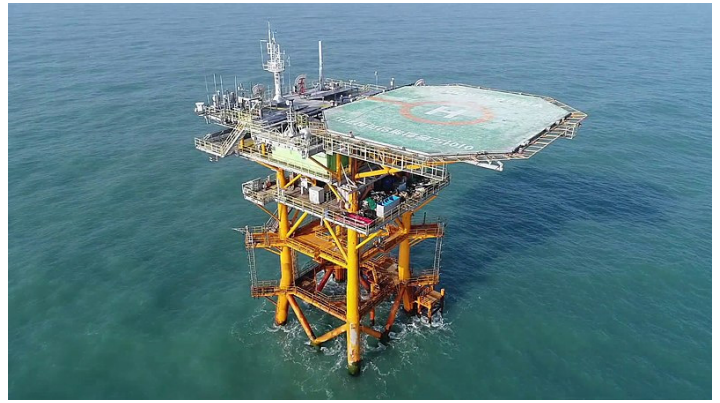
## Duration of the Blockade

Opinions differ regarding the duration of time that Taiwan could likely hold out against a PRC maritime blockade without the intervention of its partners like the United States. Some scholars argue that Taiwan would run out of fuel for its electrical grid in a matter of weeks.<sup>34</sup> Others argue that a policy of rationing could allow Taiwan to survive a blockade indefinitely.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the length of time that Taiwan can survive a blockade, it is highly likely that Seoul would refrain from provocative measures to support a US response until at least one or more weeks after the blockade began. This is because Seoul, alongside other allies and partners, would need to ascertain whether the blockade is a precursor to an all-out invasion of Taiwan. In light of the real possibility that a war between the United States and China over Taiwan would trigger a conflict on the Korean Peninsula, Seoul would face little incentive to commit its naval assets outside of Northeast Asia if it suspected that war with North Korea was imminent. Therefore, Seoul will require a period of at least one or more weeks to establish confidence that Beijing's strategy merely involves a maritime blockade to force Taipei's capitulation, and not an amphibious invasion. Only after this point would it consider committing significant military assets to a US-led response.

After Seoul has confidence that the PRC's plans do not stretch beyond a maritime blockade, it will face increasing incentives to intervene in a US coalition for as long as the blockade persists. Given analysts' predictions that a blockade would cost South Korea an estimated 445 billion KRW (345 million USD) per day in economic damage, Seoul will face rising domestic pressure to intervene to mitigate further losses.<sup>36</sup>

However, if Seoul assesses that Taipei is close to a point



*Image: The ROK's Ieodo Ocean Research Station built atop the disputed Ieodo (이 어 도) or “Socotra Rock” maritime feature in the East China Sea. (Image source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))*

of capitulation, its incentive to intervene will drastically decline—and this author expects that the ROK will standby until Taiwan's surrender so as to avoid antagonizing Beijing with futile policies.

## PRC Blockade: A lose-lose scenario necessitating ROK naval expansion

Regardless of whether the PRC successfully forces Taiwan's capitulation, ROK scholars consider a maritime blockade to represent a dire threat to the ROK's own territorial security. Such an operation would signal Beijing's willingness to directly use the PLAN to coerce its Asian neighbors. Indeed, even if Beijing fails to capture Taiwan, scholars such as Kim estimate that the PRC may “seek to restore pride by carrying out its goals towards other maritime disputes in the area.” Such operations may be targeted at the “Japan-controlled Senkaku Islands;” South Korea's “exclusive economic zone in the West Sea [Yellow Sea];” or Ieodo (이 어 도) (a submerged rock in the East China Sea that is claimed by both the PRC and ROK). In short, ROK scholars writing about Taiwan-related maritime crises view such scenarios through the lens of South Korea's naval weakness *vis-à-vis* the PRC.

Jeon Chang-Bin (전창빈) of the ROK Naval Academy (해군대학) issues a call to action for Seoul to invest in anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capacities in

response to Beijing's threats towards Taiwan. Such capacities include "rockets, ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and unmanned air vehicles." These investments should be accompanied by the introduction of a "mobile fleet, an aircraft carrier, and nuclear-powered submarines." Jeon acknowledges that while the ROK can independently develop a mobile fleet and aircraft carrier, it must presently rely on the support of the United States and partners to obtain nuclear-powered submarines. Nonetheless, Jeon hints that as "time passes and international conditions change," the ROK may be able to independently obtain this capacity.<sup>37</sup>

"In short, ROK scholars writing about Taiwan-related maritime crises view such scenarios through the lens of South Korea's naval weakness *vis-à-vis* the PRC."

In a sign that the ROK security establishment is waking up to the necessity of a maritime strategy, the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued its first comprehensive regional strategy document in 2022, with a focus on maritime defense.<sup>38</sup>

## Conclusion

South Korean experts who have written about a PRC maritime blockade of Taiwan universally recognize the grave implications of such an operation to Korea's maritime and economic security. Nonetheless, the scholars generally suggest that Seoul refrain from policies that place ROK military assets in combat zones around Taiwan, suggesting that Seoul merely prepare escort capacities and financial indemnities for ROK-bound shipping. However, the scholars acknowledge that the ROK may engage in actions more provocative to the PRC in response to specific demands from its ally, the United States. The policies of Japan are also likely to guide South Korea's choices, as Seoul will not seek to outdo nor fall short of the response from Tokyo. Meanwhile, the duration of the blockade will influence the ROK's strategic decision-making.

Whether or not a United States-led coalition is able to de-

feat a PRC blockade of Taiwan, ROK experts have raised concerns that such an operation would prove Beijing's willingness to use naval force against its Asian neighbors. As a result, Korean authors advocate that Seoul invest in robust A2/AD systems and unprecedented naval capacities such as aircraft carriers and nuclear-powered submarines.

Even as the PRC's maritime threats towards Taiwan are painted in a grave light, some ROK scholars have suggested that Seoul may capitalize on this tension to serve as a mediator between the PRC, Taiwan, and the West, thus easing international conflict and establishing itself as a "global pivotal state" (글로벌 중추국가).<sup>39</sup> In doing so, the ROK could establish itself as a moderating force for peace in East Asia, and avoid the "lose-lose" scenario associated with a maritime contingency related to Taiwan.



## ENDNOTES

- 1 *Inter alia*: Garlauskas, Markus, “The United States and its allies must be ready to deter a two-front war and nuclear attacks in East Asia,” Atlantic Council, August 16, 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-united-states-and-its-allies-must-be-ready-to-deter-a-two-front-war-and-nuclear-attacks-in-east-asia/>.
- 2 Lee, Wootae (이태우) and Hwang Taeyeon (황태연), “대만 선거 이후 양안 위기 가능성과 한국의 대응” [The Possibility of a Cross-Strait Crisis following the Taiwan Election and South Korea’s Responses], CO 24-07 (Seoul, South Korea: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2024), [https://www.kinu.or.kr/main/module/report/view.do?idx=125222&nav\\_code=mai1674786581](https://www.kinu.or.kr/main/module/report/view.do?idx=125222&nav_code=mai1674786581).
- 3 Kim, Hyeonseung [김현승], “대만해협 위기 시 중국의 해군력 운용 양상 평가 및 안보적 함의” [An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis], 한국군사학논총 [Review of Korean Military Studies] 7, no. 1 (June 2018): 197-224, <http://doi.org/10.34166/rokms.2018.7.1.197>.
- 4 Jeon, Chang-bin (전창빈), “중국의 대만통일 전략과 한국의 해양안보 - 일국양제를 위한 회색지대 전략과 삼전(三戰)” [China’s Reunification Strategy for Taiwan and Korea’s Maritime Security - The Gray Zone Strategy and the Three Warfare for One Country, Two Systems], 한국해양안보논총 [Korea Maritime Security Review] 6, no. 2 (December 2023): 75-107, <http://doi.org/10.23270/kmsr.2023.6.2.003>.
- 5 Lewis, James Andrew, “Cyberattack on Civilian Critical Infrastructures in a Taiwan Scenario,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 11, 2023, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/cyberattack-civilian-critical-infrastructures-taiwan-scenario>.
- 6 Manning, Robert, “Is a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan the Most Likely Scenario?” Stimson Center, October 27, 2023, <https://www.stimson.org/2023/is-a-chinese-invasion-of-taiwan-the-most-likely-scenario/>.
- 7 Garlauskas, “The United States and its allies must be ready to deter a two-front war and nuclear attacks in East Asia.”
- 8 Jestrab, Marek, “A maritime blockade of Taiwan by the People’s Republic of China: A strategy to defeat fear and coercion,” Atlantic Council, December 12, 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/content-series/atlantic-council-strategy-paper-series/a-maritime-blockade-of-taiwan-by-the-peoples-republic-of-china-a-strategy-to-defeat-fear-and-coercion/>.
- 9 Kim, “An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis.”
- 10 As defined by researchers at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in 2003, “anti-access (A2) strategies aim to prevent US forces entry into a theater of operations, [while] area-denial (AD) operations aim to prevent their freedom of action in the more narrow confines of the area under an enemy’s direct control. AD operations thus include actions by an adversary in the air, on land, and on and under the sea to contest and prevent US joint operations within their defended battlespace.” See: Andrew Krepinevich, Barry Watts & Robert Work, *Meeting the Anti-Access and Area-Denial Challenge*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, May 2003, pp. ii, <https://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/2003.05.20-Anti-Access-Area-Denial-A2-AD.pdf>. This terminology and concept has been adopted by the US military: see US Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept*, January 2012, [https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/JOAC\\_Jan%202012\\_Signed.pdf](https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/JOAC_Jan%202012_Signed.pdf).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Lee and Hwang, “The Possibility of a Cross-Strait Crisis following the Taiwan Election and South Korea’s Responses.”
- 13 Welch, Jennifer et. al, “Xi, Biden and the \$10 Trillion Cost of War Over Taiwan,” *Bloomberg*, January 8, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2024-01-09/if-china-invades-taiwan-it-would-cost-world-economy-10-trillion>.
- 14 Hong, Jae-pyo [홍제표] “대만과 한반도, 어디가 더 위험할까” [Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula, Which is more Dangerous?], East Asia Institute, May 5, 2023, [https://eai.or.kr/new/en/project/view.asp?intSeq=21876&board=kor\\_eaiinmedia](https://eai.or.kr/new/en/project/view.asp?intSeq=21876&board=kor_eaiinmedia).
- 15 Kim, “An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis.”
- 16 Jestrab, “A maritime blockade of Taiwan by the People’s Republic of China: A strategy to defeat fear and coercion.”
- 17 Lee and Hwang, “The Possibility of a Cross-Strait Crisis following the Taiwan Election and South Korea’s Responses.”
- 18 Kim, “An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis;” Hanbyeol Sohn, “Envisioning S Korea’s role in a Taiwan war,” *Asia Times*, April 2, 2024, <https://asiatimes.com/2024/04/envisioning-s-koreas-role-in-a-taiwan-war/>.
- 19 Jestrab, “A maritime blockade of Taiwan by the People’s Republic of China: A strategy to defeat fear and coercion.”
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Kim, “An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis.”
- 22 Lee and Hwang, “The Possibility of a Cross-Strait Crisis following the Taiwan Election and South Korea’s Responses.”
- 23 Park, Byung Kwang [박병광], “대만문제를 둘러싼 군사적 충돌 가능성과 우리의 대응방향” [The Possibility of Military Confrontations over Taiwan and the ROK’s Responses], 187 (Seoul, South Korea: Institute for National Security Studies, 2022), <https://www.inss.re.kr/upload/bbs/BBSA05/202211/F20221108132202776.pdf>.
- 24 Lee and Hwang, “The Possibility of a Cross-Strait Crisis following the Taiwan Election and South Korea’s Responses.”

- 25 Kim, "An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis."
- 26 Jung, Sung Chul, "More Unstable Internally, More Reliable Externally: South Korea's Participation in the Vietnam War," *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 14, no. 1 (April 2016): 31-52, <https://doi.org/10.14731/kjis.2016.4.14.1.31>.
- 27 Kim, "An Analysis of Chinese Naval Concept of Operations and Its Security Implications in case of Taiwan Strait Crisis."
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Park, "The Possibility of Military Confrontations over Taiwan and the ROK's Responses."
- 30 U.S. Mission Korea, "Joint Statement of Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States," U.S. Embassy & Consulate in the Republic of Korea, November 15, 2024, <https://kr.usembassy.gov/111924-joint-statement-of-japan-the-republic-of-korea-and-the-united-states/>.
- 31 Reuters, "Trump considering withdrawing up to 4,000 U.S. troops from South Korea," November 20, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/markets/trump-considering-withdrawing-up-to-4000-us-troops-from-south-korea-report-idUSL3N2804OK/>.
- 32 Hornung, Jeffrey, "What the United States Wants From Japan in Taiwan," *Foreign Policy*, May 10, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/10/what-the-united-states-wants-from-japan-in-taiwan/>.
- 33 Hornung, Jeffrey, *Japan's Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency*, RR-A314-1 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2020), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA314-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA314-1.html).
- 34 Hille, Kathrin, "Taiwan war game exposes vulnerability of energy grid to a China attack," *Financial Times*, March 16, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/9ac24303-aef9-4a73-825d-c32366a9cde6>.
- 35 Alperovitch, Dmitri, "A Chinese Economic Blockade of Taiwan Would Fail or Launch a War," *War on the Rocks*, June 5, 2024, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/06/a-chinese-economic-blockade-of-taiwan-would-fail-or-launch-a-war/>.
- 36 Hong, "Taiwan and the Korean Peninsula, Which is more Dangerous?"
- 37 Jeon, "China's Reunification Strategy for Taiwan and Korea's Maritime Security - The Gray Zone Strategy and the Three Warfare for One Country, Two Systems."
- 38 Bae, Hakyung [배 학영], "대만사태 시 군사적 시나리오와 한국의 대응방향" [Military Scenarios in the Event of a Taiwan Incident and South Korea's Responses], JPI Peacenet 2023-13 (Seogwipo, South Korea: Jeju Peace Institute, 2023), <http://jpi.or.kr/?p=21540>.
- 39 Park, "The Possibility of Military Confrontations over Taiwan and the ROK's Responses."

## About the Author



Ben Sando is a research fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute, where he investigates PRC united front influence operations and hosts the *GTI Insights* podcast. He previously worked at the Doublethink Lab NGO in Taipei, Taiwan, studying PRC united front strategy for the China Index project.

Sando holds an MA in Asian Studies from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. He completed his BA at Stanford University, where he majored in International Relations and minored in Mechanical Engineering.

Sando has lived in Seoul, South Korea, as a researcher at the ROK National Assembly Research Service and the Yonsei University Institute for Sinology. Fluent in Mandarin and Korean, his writing has been published by the *Global Taiwan Brief*, Council on Foreign Relations, *East Asia Forum*, *The Diplomat*, *NK News*, and others.

## About GTI

GTI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit policy incubator dedicated to insightful, cutting-edge, and inclusive research on policy issues regarding Taiwan and the world. Our mission is to enhance the relationship between Taiwan and other countries, especially the United States, through policy research and programs that promote better public understanding about Taiwan and its people.

## Acknowledgements

The views expressed in this paper are the authors' own and do not necessarily represent the positions of the Global Taiwan Institute.

Cover Photo: Image: *The South Korea Cheonghae Unit* ('청해부대') maritime escort force parades in Busan in 2013. (Image source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))