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By: John Dotson

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Introduction

In late May, Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. visited Tokyo for a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi—a summit in which the two leaders announced that ties between their countries were being elevated to the level of a “[comprehensive strategic partnership](#).” Among the [issues discussed at the summit](#) were an agreement for the increased exchange of intelligence information (the “General Security of Military Information Agreement” or GSOMIA), and a new series of negotiations to resolve maritime sovereignty disputes. The latter series of talks will be primarily focused on issues delineating the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) and continental shelves of the two countries, which carry implications for fishing rights and other economic activity.

These negotiations continue a trend of warming ties between the two states—to include a growing security relationship, as seen in the “[Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement](#)” signed in August 2025. That agreement opened up mutual military base access, and provided for “cooperative activities, such as joint exercises and disaster relief,” and to “improve interoperability between the [armed] forces of the two countries.” The growing security relationship has also been seen in agreements for transfers of military equipment: most prominently, plans announced this year for the transfer from Japan to the Philippines of [five Abukuma-class destroyer escort ships](#) in 2027, once they are decommissioned from service with the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF).

Amidst the complicated competing sovereignty claims in the East China Sea (ECS) and the South China Sea (SCS)—which include both Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) amongst the multiple rival claimants—the bilateral negotiations between

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Image: Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (left podium) and Japanese Prime Minister Tanaka Takaichi (right podium) at a joint press conference in Tokyo (May 28). During their summit, one of the initiatives announced was a new series of negotiations to resolve maritime disputes between the two countries—an announcement that triggered an angry response from the government of the PRC. (Image source: [Japanese Prime Minister's Office](#))

Japan and the Philippines announced at the May summit are a significant step towards untangling disputes that might otherwise hinder their advancing security relationship. The announcements also came close in time to a significant anniversary regarding SCS territorial claims: the 10th anniversary of the July 2016 [“South China Sea Arbitration” ruling](#) by the International Court of Arbitration in The Hague. This case, brought in response to a filing by the Philippines, substantively rejected the expansive maritime sovereignty claims made by the PRC accompanying its asserted [“Nine Dash Line”](#) in the SCS.

What might have otherwise seemed like a low-key diplomatic announcement between Japan and the Philippines prompted a furious reaction from Beijing. The PRC’s diplomatic and military responses in June and July further asserted its claims over disputed maritime territories—as well as Taiwan itself. Additionally, Beijing seized on the talks as a pretext to advance more provocative PLA military presence operations into the waters east of Taiwan.

Taiwan and PRC Reactions to the Japan-Philippines Maritime Sovereignty Talks

Taipei’s Response

Taiwan, in its official state identity as the Republic of China (ROC), maintains [extensive legacy sovereignty claims](#) in the SCS and its maritime periphery. Accordingly, the joint Japan-Philippines announcement about maritime sovereignty talks put Taiwan’s government in a slightly awkward position: while Taipei has been [broadly supportive of growing Japan-Philippines security ties](#), the talks present the prospect of Taipei being excluded from negotiations over territories officially claimed by the ROC (even if those territories lay beyond *de facto* ROC administration). Accordingly, the ROC Foreign Ministry issued a relatively [measured statement on June 3](#) that maintained traditional ROC claims, called for all sides to respect Taiwan’s fishery usage and other rights, and stated that: “Given the high degree of overlap between the area to

be negotiated by Japan and the Philippines and Taiwan's exclusive economic zone off its east coast, Taiwan again calls on both nations to take this fact into account, fully consider Taiwan's rights and interests, and consult with Taiwan on relevant issues."

Beijing's Response

By contrast, the reaction from the PRC was much harsher—and involved not only diplomatic condemnation, but also a state media propaganda campaign and additional gray zone military actions to the east of Taiwan. Further, the PRC state response further sought to leverage the situation to further assert its own sovereignty claims over Taiwan. For example, in the [PRC Foreign Ministry \(外交部\) press conference on June 2](#), spokesperson Mao Ning (毛宁) stated that:

China has made clear its position on the announced maritime delimitation talks between Japan and the Philippines [...] the area involved in their planned talks is east of China's Taiwan island [and] China has exclusive [sic] economic zone and continental shelf in this area. [...] Any delimitation concerning waters to the east of Taiwan must have China as a party to the talks. [...] The two sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one and the same China. To uphold national sovereignty and maritime rights and interests is the shared responsibility of all Chinese people on both sides of the Strait. [1]

On June 7, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s official mouthpiece *People's Daily* [published an authoritative editorial](#) on the issue, titled "The Japan-Philippines Connection Is a Dangerous Step Towards Bringing Turmoil to the Asia-Pacific Region" (日菲勾连, 祸乱亚太的危险一步). The editorial was published under the byline "Zhong Sheng" (钟声), a pseudonym used for authoritative statements on foreign policy issues. [2] The editorial declared that:

From announcing the start of the so-called "boundary delineation talks" (所谓海域"划界谈判") to increasing intelligence sharing, defense equipment exchanges and joint exercises, Japan and the Philippines have, under the name of "security cooperation," manufactured bloc confrontations, raising up real hazards to the region. [...] This not only caused great concern among many people in the region, but has also met with widespread opposition from the international community. [...] [The] talks completely lack a basis in law, [and] seriously encroach on China's maritime sovereignty rights. [...] The Japan-Philippines proposed boundaries are located to the east of China's Taiwan island (位于中国台湾岛以东) [...] China possesses the exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in this sea area.

The diplomatic broadsides were also accompanied by a stepped-up media propaganda campaign intended to denigrate Japanese and Filipino leaders in personal terms. One of the more shocking examples of this material emerged in mid-July: an animated video posted by the state media outlet *China Daily*, which personified the Philippines as a monkey manipulated by America and Japan (*see image below*). [3] The video provoked widespread outrage in the Philippines—as well as a personal response from President Marcos, who reportedly [summoned the PRC ambassador](#) for a direct protest. President Marcos also appeared to make veiled reference to the controversy in his [July 27 state of the nation speech](#), in which he stated that "Of late, our very humanity has been called into question," and that "We are Filipinos, and we do not yield" in the face of foreign pressure.

As the controversy unfolded in June and July, the PRC even appeared to leverage the dispute to signal even more extensive claims at the expense of the Philippines—by further expanding its existing claims on Taiwan. An [academic conference](#) held in late June at Guangzhou's Jinan University (暨南大学)—an institution [directly operated by the CCP's United Front Work Department](#) (UFWD, 统一战线工作部), and therefore an agent for CCP propaganda and united front work—issued a finding that the Philippines' Batanes Islands (located in the Luzon Strait between Taiwan and the Philippines' northern island of Luzon) in fact rightfully belonged to the PRC. The stated rationale for this was that the islands lay on the continental shelf of Taiwan; and as Taiwan is PRC territory, the islands were therefore also rightfully Chinese territory. The conference announcement does not represent an official government statement *per se*; however, coming from a UFWD institution, it appears to be a semi-official CCP trial balloon for what could become a more direct claim in the future.

The PRC's Stepped-Up Military Activity East of Taiwan

Increased Coast Guard Patrol Activity

The PRC accompanied its rhetoric with expanded military activity in the vicinity of Taiwan, including noteworthy operations conducted in the waters to the east of the island. Much of this activity consisted of increased coast guard patrols—frequently described in Chinese state media as "inspection" (巡查) patrols, employing language intended to emphasize that the patrols are covering domestic territory (*see images below*). Taiwan's government reported a significant [rise in PRC coast guard activity](#) around Taiwan during the month of June: indicating that 55 vessels had operated near Taiwan (locations and



Image left: A still image from an AI-generated video posted by the Chinese state media outlet China Daily in mid-July, which personified the Philippines as a hapless monkey manipulated by Japan and the United States (image source: [Sina.cn](https://www.sina.cn)).



Image right: A July 15 cartoon posted by China Daily, depicting Uncle Sam as the sinister puppet master behind international rulings (such as the 2016 International Court of Arbitration ruling) that have rejected PRC maritime claims. (Image source: [China Daily](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn)).

distances not specified), reportedly representing a near doubling of the number observed in May.

The PRC also stepped up maritime activity to the east of Taiwan during this period. At least two PRC Coast Guard task forces, each consisting of a pair of ships, operated to the east of Taiwan in June and July (*see [here](#) and [here](#)*). The first task group, which operated through June, consisted of the vessels *Daishan* (岱山) (2502) and *Baita* (白塔) (2304). On or about July 4, these ships were relieved by another task group consisting of the vessels *Xiushan* (秀山) (2305) and *Chongming* (崇明) (1401). In turn, the Taiwan Coast Guard deployed its own ships to monitor the PRC vessels—including the vessels *Bali* (八里) and *Hualien* (花蓮), which were reportedly dispatched to observe the second task group in July.

The Chinese government explicitly linked these patrols with both the the Japan-Philippines talks, and its claims over Taiwan. The PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (国台办) issued a [statement on July 2](#) that reiterated “Taiwan is a part of China,” and then proceeded to assert: “For the mainland’s coast guard to conduct law enforcement inspection patrols [east of Taiwan] is exercising jurisdiction, [and]

is maintaining national territorial sovereignty and just oceanic rights; and is also a necessary action directed towards Japan and the Philippines bypassing China to commence unauthorized maritime delineation talks that encroach on China’s maritime rights” (大陆海警在相关海域开展执法巡查，是依法行使管辖权，是维护国家领土主权和海洋权益的正义之举，也是针对日本、菲律宾绕开中国擅自启动在该海域划界谈判、侵害中国海洋权益采取的必要行动)。

The July 6 Submarine Missile Launch

A more dramatic and provocative action occurred on July 6, when [PRC state media announced](#) that a PLA Navy submarine had conducted a mid-day missile test launch in the Pacific Ocean. The location, type of submarine and missile, and flight path were all unspecified; however, the missile was described as carrying a “training simulation warhead” (训练模拟弹头) rather than an active warhead. [4] The same day, Joseph Wu (吴釗燮), secretary-general of Taiwan’s National Security Council, posted to social media a [graphic depicting the flight path of the missile](#). The post identified the missile as a JL-2 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), and depicted a launch point of origin



Image: A still image from a June 2 PRC state television news segment about the PRC Coast Guard vessels conducting an “inspection” (巡查) around “China’s Taiwan island” (中国台湾岛). (Image source: [CCTV](#))

in the South China Sea, with a splashdown area roughly halfway between the Pacific island states of Nauru and Tonga (see image below).

Despite the PRC government’s boilerplate assertions that the missile launch was routine and [“not directed towards any specific country or target”](#) (不针对任何特定国家和目标), the launch prompted a [negative reaction from many regional governments](#): Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called the launch a “provocative act” that “destabilized the region;” and Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara expressed “grave concern regarding China’s increased military activity” in the region.

Conclusion

The initiation of the maritime territorial talks between Japan and the Philippines, while seemingly an anodyne diplomatic announcement, carries alarming implications from Beijing’s perspective. On the surface, the prospect of the two countries reaching bilateral resolution on disputed maritime claims would complicate the PRC’s efforts to assert its own ownership over those territories. But on a deeper level, the Japan-Philippines announcements are representative of slowly coalescing regional security relationships—which include, on a quieter level, Taiwan—that frustrate Beijing’s attempts to play divide-and-conquer with less powerful Pacific states. Accordingly, the PRC initiated a furious response, across the diplomatic,

informational, and military domains.

Of the latter, the July 6 ICBM launch was the most provocative of Beijing’s measures. Despite routine blandishments that the test was routine, this is unlikely. Both the timing of the launch, and its apparent flight path—through the Luzon Strait, and between the Philippines and Japan—appeared very likely intended to send a saber-rattling message to both Tokyo and Manila (whether or not the launch may have also addressed PLA weapons testing requirements).

As a propaganda tactic, the CCP leadership also regularly seizes on political disputes as a pretext to expand its coercive gray zone military operations directed at other states. (Editor’s note: For an exemplary discussion of this practice in another context, see “Four Years Later: The Legacy of the Nancy Pelosi Visit on Taiwan’s Security” by Thomas J. Shattuck, elsewhere in this issue.) Accordingly, in the days to come we are likely to see more regularized PRC coast guard presence patrols to the east of Taiwan, as these vessels conduct continued “inspection” patrols in what Beijing claims as its territory.

As Japan and the Philippines continue to develop their quasi-alliance in the face of shared PRC coercive pressure, they are likely to continue exploring further means for security cooperation. As they do so, Beijing will almost certainly continue to ramp up aggressive measures in



Image: A graphic from a June 2 Chinese state television news segment about the route supposedly taken by PRC Coast Guard vessels sailing to the east of Taiwan. The three points identified are: Kinmen Island (west), the Senkaku / Diaoyu Islands (northeast), and the waters east of Taiwan itself. The graphic seeks to present an image of Taiwan as surrounded by these patrols. (Image source: [CCTV](#))

response—and will seek to leverage these same steps to further assert its claims over Taiwan.

The main point: In June and July 2026, the PRC government initiated a series of measures—diplomatic, informational, and military—to leverage pressure against a growing security relationship between Japan and the Philippines. These measures, which are likely to continue into the future, will also be leveraged by Beijing to ramp up military presence in the region and to further assert its sovereignty claims over Taiwan.

[1] Of note, in the same press conference the spokesperson used the context of the maritime talks to attack Taiwan's current presidential administration: "The DPP authorities, in pursuing selfish political gains, have gone so far as to put the Chinese nation's vital interest up for sale, a move that betrays ancestors and breaches all moral boundaries. This once again shows that these separatists have completely forfeited the national stance and degen-

erated into traitors to the nation." The official comments also singled out Philippines Defense Minister Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr. for personal vilification. (For more on the latter point, see endnote #3, below.) See: "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on June 2, 2026," PRC Foreign Ministry (June 2, 2026), https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/fyrbt/lxjzh/202606/t20260602_11923474.html.

[2] The characters 钟声 literally mean "sound of a bell" (or clock), but are also a homophone for "voice of China" (中声). *People's Daily* itself describes Zhong Sheng as "a pen name often used by *People's Daily* to express its views on foreign policy and international affairs." As an example, see: Zhong Sheng, "Sliding Toward 'Predatory Hegemony,' U.S. Is 'Regressing' into Future," *People's Daily*, April 27, 2026. <https://en.people.cn/n3/2026/0427/c90000-20450727.html>.

[3] There are other recent examples of vituperative

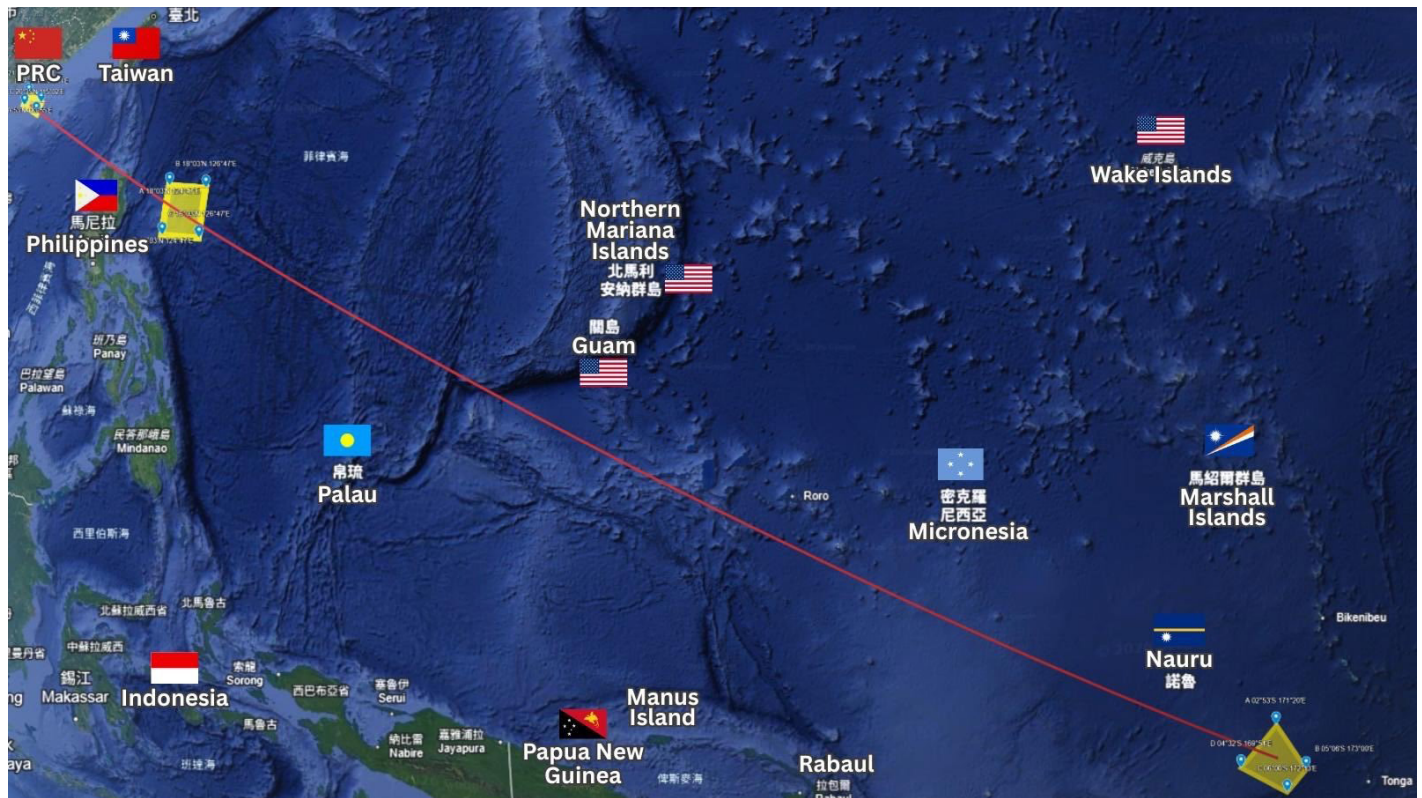


Image: A graphic posted by Joseph Wu, secretary-general of Taiwan's National Security Council, depicting the flight path of the July 6 Chinese missile launch: from a launch area in the South China Sea east of Hainan Island, to an ocean area in the South Pacific to the west of Tonga. (Image source: [Joseph Wu X Account](#))

personal attacks on Filipino political leaders. For example, in the June 2 PRC Foreign Ministry press conference referenced above (*see endnote #1*), Mao Ning described the defense minister of the Philippines, Gilberto C. Teodoro, Jr., as follows: "This Philippine defense secretary is known to vilify China. His latest rhetoric [...] again shows his complete disregard of the welfare of the Philippine people [...] All he cares [*sic*] is selfish personal gains to the point that he would perform political theatrics even when people's well-being is at stake. What he does is seriously detrimental to China-Philippines ties and trust and not at all in the interest of his own country and people." (See: "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on June 2, 2026," PRC Foreign Ministry (June 2, 2026), https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/fyrbt/lxzh/202606/t20260602_11923474.html.) In another example, a [July 15 state media cartoon](#) depicted a Philippine leader (likely intended to be President Marcos) as a garishly made-up clown, in a sinking boat made up of the 2016 arbitration decision. This latter example, and the video depicting the Philippines as a monkey, demonstrate the increasing use of AI-generated context in PRC state propaganda; as well as an increasing willingness to attack perceived regional opponents in crude, and even racist, terms.

[4] The launch platform was not specified, but was likely one of the six Type-094 (NATO *Jin*-class) ballistic missile submarines operated by the PLA Navy, and homeported on Hainan Island. See: ODIN database, "Type 094 Class (Jin Class) Chinese Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine" (updated April 26, 2024),

<https://odin.t2com.army.mil/WEG/Asset/e9abff9d-94c4503bfdeb09e913e9ea0f>.

Are Japan Weapons Exports to Taiwan Conceivable in a Future Strait War?

By: Davide Campagnola

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On April 21 this year, the cabinet of Prime Minis-

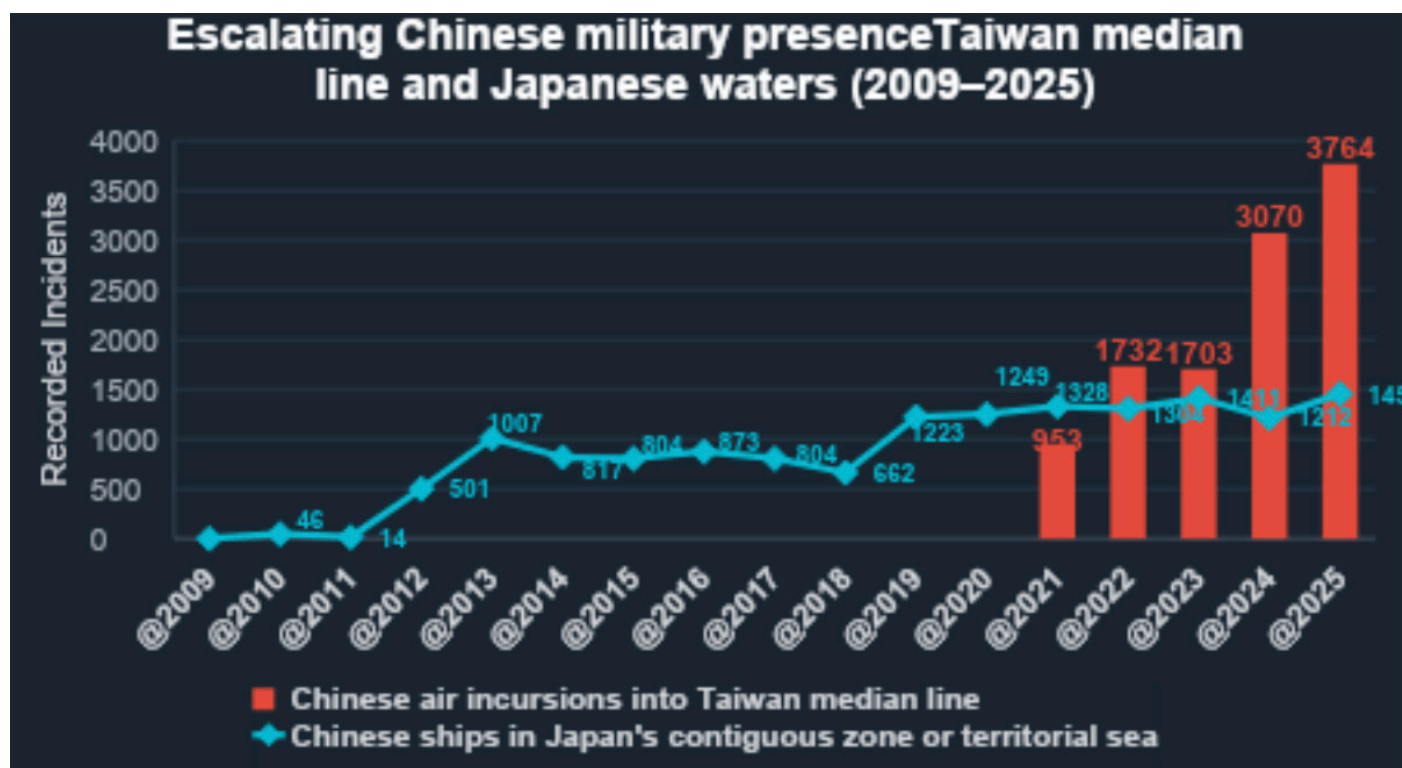


Image: Chinese incursions beyond the Taiwan Strait median line and into Japan's contiguous zone or territorial sea (2009–2025). (Image Source: The author with data from the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan](#), [Ministry of National Defense of Taiwan](#), and [PLATracker](#))

ter Sanae Takaichi [approved](#) a significant revision to Japan's [Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology](#), a set of self-imposed guidelines for the government's arms sales to other countries. The revision cleared the way for Japan to export lethal weapons to 18 partner countries.

Japan's arms exports restrictions were [first articulated](#) in 1967 under Prime Minister Eisaku Sato. Then, Japan [prohibited arms exports](#) to three kinds of buyers: communist states, countries subject to United Nations Security Council arms embargoes, and parties involved in or at risk of international conflict. These constraints were [further tightened](#) in 1976 into a near-total ban of weapons transfers.

Yet, limitations on arms exports have gradually eased since the Japanese government [outlined](#) its initial *Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology* document in 2014. In subsequent revisions to its arms exports policy, the government has relaxed sales for [five non-lethal categories](#): mine-countermeasures, surveillance, warning, transport, and rescue equipment. By extending this trend to the transfer of lethal weapons to foreign countries, the 2026 revision under Prime Minister Takaichi represents the most consequential

relaxation yet of the restrictions introduced in 1967.

Japan's decision to lift its long-standing ban on lethal weapons exports is the latest step in the steady erosion of its self-imposed constraints on the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) and Japan's defense manufacturing sector. This evolution has followed shifts in regional tensions. Indeed, since the 1990s, Japan has gradually reshaped the role of the JSDF through a series of significant steps. Notably, the 1992 [International Peace Cooperation Act](#) enabled the participation of the JSDF in United Nations peacekeeping missions. In 2007, the Japan Defense Agency [was upgraded](#) to a full Ministry of Defense. And in 2015, the [Legislation for Peace and Security](#) reinterpreted Article Nine of the Constitution of Japan to allow for collective self-defense, thereby enabling Japan to defend allied nations under attack.

Amid rising threats from China, as well as the United States' unpredictability under the second administration of President Donald Trump, the 2026 decision to allow for lethal arms exports echoes with Japan's current goal to enhance both the [JSDF](#) and its [deterrence power](#). Under the revised framework, Japan can now export lethal defense equipment to states with which it has signed an [Agreement Concerning](#)

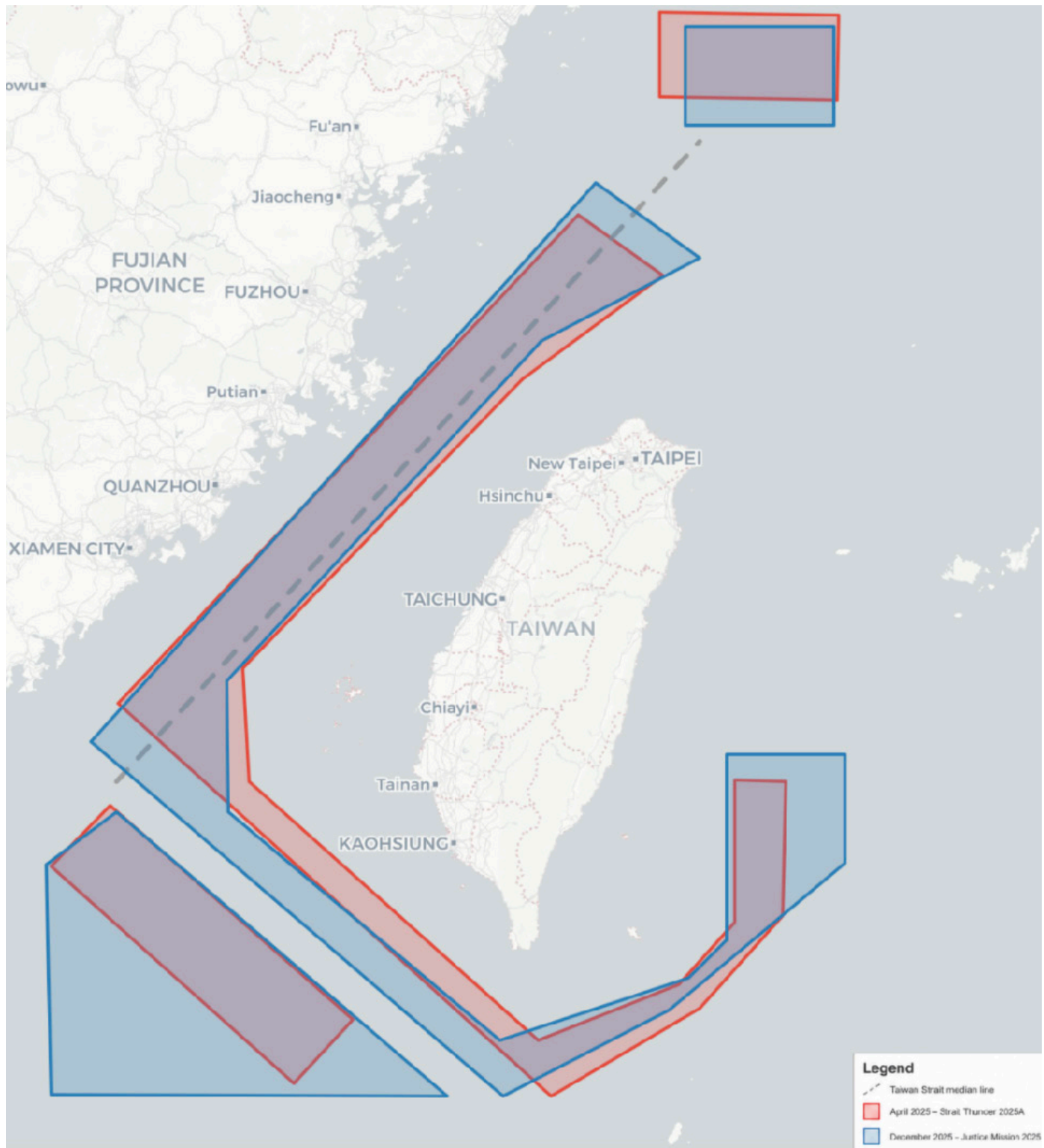


Image: The locations of People's Liberation Army drills around Taiwan in April and December 2025. (Image Source: The author with data from [Ministry of National Defense of Taiwan](#))

[the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology](#). The Japanese government [argues](#) that by expanding sales channels and securing production capacity, such transfers will help maintain a [resilient and sustainable](#) domestic defense-industrial base on which

the JSDF depends.

This revision has already been [characterized](#) by Beijing as a further departure away from Japan's traditional pacifist posture. China's criticism is the latest measure in a period of deteriorating bilateral

relations, beginning with [Beijing's reaction](#) to Prime Minister Takaichi's November 2025 [declaration](#) that a Chinese military attack on Taiwan could constitute a "survival-threatening situation" for Japan, echoing the terminology for situations in [Japan's legislative acts regarding national security](#) that allow for military intervention. Tensions grew further after the [transit of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force \(JMSDF\) destroyer JS Ikazuchi](#) through the Taiwan Strait on April 17, the first such passage under Takaichi's term.

This new arms exports framework is a further building block in Japan's deterrence architecture in East Asia, with immediate implications for partners such as the [Philippines](#) and [Australia](#), who have signed Agreements Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology with Japan. Takaichi's move has signaled to Beijing that it faces an increasingly capable and connected regional security network.

But it also opens a question regarding one of Tokyo's most immediate neighbors: Taiwan. In its 2021 [Defense White Paper](#), Tokyo explicitly framed stability in the Taiwan Strait as essential for Japan's own security, a stance reiterated [several times](#) since then. Notably, during a visit to Taipei before she became prime minister in April 2025, Takaichi [proposed](#) the idea that Japan, Taiwan, Australia, India, and European countries should form a quasi-security alliance to jointly maintain their security.

Under current conditions, arms exports from Japan to Taiwan are inconceivable and would trigger an immediate response from Beijing. Nonetheless, as Japan seeks to strengthen its regional deterrence, it is important to consider under what conditions—if any—Japan's new export framework could extend to Taipei.

Could Weapons Be Exported to Taiwan?

Taiwan has no Agreement Concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology with Japan, and Japan does not recognize Taiwan as a country. Moreover, the changes regarding arms exports explicitly exclude transfers to parties engaged in ongoing armed conflict. Therefore, Japan's current restrictions would rule out exports to Taiwan in a war scenario.

However, the revised framework contains an [important exception](#): if the National Security Council determines that Japan's national security is directly at stake, lethal transfers remain permissible even in

circumstances where a recipient is in active combat. This grants Tokyo the flexibility to decide—based on its own national security assessment—whether to transfer weapons to a party in active conflict. Given Japan's own framing of a Taiwan contingency as potentially survival-threatening scenario, this flexibility functions as a deliberate deterrence tool.

Japan's role in a potential Taiwan Strait conflict has long remained [unclear](#). Certain experts [envision](#) Japan's role primarily as a supportive one: notably through logistical backing for potential US operations, and through rear-area functions that stop short of direct military engagement.

The revision of arms exports does not fundamentally change these expectations, but it introduces the possibility of weapons transfers in a conflict scenario, provided that the political and security conditions are met. In this regard, Prime Minister Takaichi's November 2025 statement regarding the potentially "survival-threatening" nature of Taiwan contingency is significant, as it indicates that the political threshold for invoking such conditions has already been publicly framed.

The [growing People's Republic of China \(PRC\) military pressure](#) on both Taiwan and Japan has contributed to [increasingly close ties](#) between Taipei and Tokyo. This dynamic is also reflected in Japan's support for Taiwan's [international integration](#) and in growing cooperation between the two nations on [resilient supply chains](#). As Taiwan serves as [a buffer](#) for Okinawa and the Senkaku Islands, Japan has a direct strategic interest in ensuring that Taiwan's defensive capacity remains operational and that the status quo does not change in an unfavorable manner.

In this context, Japan's new arms export framework already reshapes Beijing's strategic calculus by strengthening the democratic security network in the region. Arms transfers that may impact Beijing's strategy include sales of the [Mogami-class frigate](#) to Australia and the [transfer](#) of *Abukuma*-class destroyer escorts to the Philippines. These acquisitions may force Chinese planners to account for a more capable set of regional partners in any military contingency. Regarding Taiwan specifically, Beijing must now incorporate into its [military calculus](#) the possibility that an armed attack on Taiwan could push Japan towards formally declaring a "survival-threatening situation," potentially triggering arms transfers as part of its response.

However, this deterrence logic is conditioned by a variable that Tokyo does not fully control: the position of the United States. Japan's posture toward Taiwan cannot be separated from the United States-Japan alliance framework, and any decision by Tokyo to transfer weapons to Taiwan in a crisis scenario would require, at minimum, a tacit American endorsement. Given the current US administration's transactional approach to Taiwan policy—in which arms sales to Taipei have themselves been subject to [discussion](#) with Beijing—such an endorsement cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, Japan cannot act unilaterally on this question as the risk to not be backed by Washington exists—as [demonstrated](#) by the November 2025 dispute when Prime Minister Takaichi's statement drew little public support from Washington, reportedly frustrating Tokyo.

However, Japan's new arms export framework aims to directly address this dependency by expanding its capacity to act in coordination with other like-minded partners beyond the United States. This flexibility remains nonetheless constrained by [Japan's current industrial capacity](#), which is unlikely to meet simultaneously the JSDF's growing needs for equipment and the demands of supporting Taiwan in the event of a full-scale military conflict.

Complexities in Wartime Arms Exports from Japan to Taiwan

In addition to political considerations, another factor that may challenge wartime arms exports to Taiwan is the physical environment in which they would have to be executed. The scale and length of a conflict in the Strait would directly influence Japan's ability to respond. China's recent military drills around Taiwan [have consistently demonstrated](#) an intent to strike the key military assets and critical infrastructure related to supply lines, including ports and airports. Such strikes would strongly complicate any attempts for external support.

While the [complexity](#) of amphibious operations, Taiwan's [geographic advantages](#), and its [asymmetric defensive capacity](#) could complicate a PRC invasion and theoretically create a window for external support, the encirclement patterns demonstrated by China's April 2025 [Strait Thunder 2025A exercise](#) and December 2025 [Justice Mission 2025 exercise](#) suggest that such transfers would face severe obstacles.

Beyond the logistical obstacles, providing arms to Taiwan during an active conflict would likely require

breaking the PRC's maritime encirclement of the island, rendering Japan a direct military target and significantly raising the cost of intervention. Pre-war transfers would avoid these logistical constraints and could strengthen Taiwan's defensive capacity more effectively, but would conflict with Japan's self-imposed restrictions on exports to countries at risk of conflict. Meanwhile, such a move would almost certainly provoke a strong response from Beijing, and could accelerate rather than deter Chinese military action by narrowing the window in which Beijing believes it can act.

Article Eight of China's 2005 [Anti-Secession Law](#) explicitly authorizes the use of "non-peaceful means" when Beijing determines that peaceful unification has become impossible, and a Japanese decision to arm Taiwan could push the PRC to such a conclusion—whether out of fear of losing strategic control, concern over a broader international coalition forming around Taiwan's defense, or a determination that the conditions for peaceful reunification are being permanently foreclosed.

The status quo is already in a worryingly [unstable shape](#), and arms sales from Japan to Taiwan prior to a conflict in the Strait could increase the risk of war. The last two PRC military drills around Taiwan were ostensibly responses to Taiwan's defense policies—President Lai Ching-te's (賴清德) "[17 National Security Measures](#)" in March 2025 were followed by the PRC's *Strait Thunder 2025A* in early April; whereas *Justice Mission 2025* was seemingly intended to respond to the United States' [announcement](#) of a NT\$ 350 billion (USD \$11 billion) arms sale to Taiwan, as well as the comments from Japanese Prime Minister Takaichi. It is probable that the advent of Japanese arms transfers to Taiwan would produce an even fiercer response from Beijing.

Conclusion

Even hypothetical arms exports to Taiwan would remain highly constrained and conditional on various factors. In current peacetime conditions, they are impracticable. Yet the combination of Japan's new arms exports framework, and Prime Minister Takaichi's comments about a potential threshold for Taiwan Strait intervention, makes wartime transfers conceivable in a way that was not the case before April 2026. As Japan reassesses its role within the East Asia security architecture, broadened support for Taiwan is not to be discounted. [Drone cooperation](#) at the civilian level suggests that this expansion is already

taking place. Beyond arms exports to Taiwan, Japan's new policy expands its set of deterrence tools in the region, creating ambiguity that will raise the cost of any Chinese military action. This newly acquired arms exports flexibility must nonetheless be carefully employed: it expands both Japan's power projection and its set of available measures in a crisis, but could also make Japan a more direct target in an increasingly volatile region.

The main point: Japan's arms sales to Taiwan are legally constrained and politically impractical in a pre-war environment. However, in a scenario in which the PRC attacks Taiwan, Japan's National Security Council could determine that arms transfers to Taiwan are permissible under recent revisions to its defense posture. Nonetheless, such exports would be highly constrained by the physical environment in the Strait, and could risk putting Japan into a direct military confrontation with the PRC.

From Amap to the Foodpanda Acquisition: Taiwan Urgently Needs a Geospatial Data Governance Framework

By: Yi-Lou Lin

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The app "Amap" (高德地圖) has recently sparked a cybersecurity controversy in Taiwan. Amap, [fully owned](#) by China's Alibaba Group, is an online map that features traffic light countdown and lane-level guidance. A [government security review](#) found nine out of fifteen indicators about the app that flagged as high-risk—including continuous transmission of user data to Chinese servers, even when the application is closed. This controversy, together with Singapore-based [Grab's USD 600 million acquisition of Foodpanda's Taiwan operations](#) (a food delivery platform with the highest market share in Taiwan), has exposed a gap in Taiwan's regulatory framework: the governance of geospatial data. These two cases point to the same underlying reality—mapping data, location tracking, and movement traces are not

merely commercial assets, but core issues of national security and digital sovereignty.

At the micro level, what logistics companies collect are individual location data and behavioral patterns. Yet when aggregated, these data points allow platforms to [infer identifiable object flow patterns](#) and infrastructure distribution. The key lies not in the data itself, but in its "[inferability](#)"—i.e., the capability to analyze specific entity or individuals based on data aggregation. A single data point may be harmless, but when data reaches sufficient scale and depth of integration, platforms acquire the capacity to map how a society operates. This inferential capacity is what concerns the strategic value of geospatial data—and it is the common thread of the two cases in this article.

Two Concerning Cases

Amap [released traffic-light countdown and 3D street view functions](#) in Taiwan in April, which immediately went viral on social media. However, [when tested by the National Security Bureau \(NSB, 國家安全局\) against fifteen cybersecurity criteria, nine categories were flagged as high-risk](#)—including the continuous collection and transmission of communications data and real-time audio and video to servers in China, even when the app was closed. Subsequently, the Ministry of Digital Affairs (數位發展部) [identified Amap as a "product endangering national cybersecurity"](#) under the Cybersecurity Management Act (資通安全管理法), prohibiting its use in all government institutions. Minister of National Defense Koo Li-hsiung (顧立雄) likewise issued a blanket ban on its use for military personnel.

On a parallel track, the Singaporean company Grab's acquisition of Foodpanda's Taiwan operations has elevated cross-border data governance to a new level. GrabMaps — Grab's proprietary online map equipped with crowd-density and traffic-behavior features — signed a [memorandum of cooperation](#) with the Chinese company Huawei's Petal Maps in June 2025. Notably, with cloud storage hosted on Alibaba Cloud, [Grab has claimed](#) that this partnership does not cover Taiwan; however, without independent third-party auditing, it remains difficult to verify the data flow from an external vantage point. Grab's [announced acquisition](#) of Foodpanda's Taiwan business, if completed, would give Grab access to vast amounts of Taiwanese user data: including addresses, contact information, and consumption patterns.

The problem is not whether Grab harbors any specific intent, but rather the risk that such concentrated and granular lifestyle data—held by a platform associated with Chinese digital infrastructure and capital structure—could more easily fall into the hands of adversarial actors.

Grab's potential acquisition of Foodpanda has also stoked concerns of further consolidation in the food delivery market. Uber holds [13.5 percent](#) of Grab's shares and [19.5 percent](#) of Delivery Hero (the parent firm of Foodpanda)'s shares—creating a “triangular stake” in which the same shareholder sits on both sides of the transaction. In the past, Uber [tried to acquire](#) Foodpanda in Taiwan, which was rejected by Taiwan's Fair Trade Commission (公平交易委員會) due to monopoly concerns. Additionally, with Uber directly holding Uber Eats—Foodpanda's primary rival in Taiwan—and controlling Grab through its 13.5 percent stake, [concerns](#) over *de facto* market concentration are mounting. Furthermore, Grab's ownership structure and technological collaboration have also fueled concerns regarding the security of Taiwanese user data. The Chinese company Didi Chuxing (滴滴出行) holds [less than 5%](#) of Grab's shares, and GrabMaps maintains [technical partnerships](#) with the Chinese companies WeRide and Momenta for autonomous-vehicle development. In other words, Grab's capital structure and technology ecosystem are closely connected to Chinese industry.

Amap and Foodpanda are not the same types of applications, and therefore pose different risks. Amap presents a direct technical risk, where software is programmed to transmit location data even when the app is closed, posing an immediate and verifiable threat. On the other hand, Grab represents an indirect structural risk, expressed through capital connections, technical cooperation, and cloud architecture—through which data may flow into adversarial legal jurisdictions.

Data Security in Mapping Platforms

Modern mapping platforms collect data that may have applications beyond normal commercial activity. Through aggregating millions of users' locations, traffic flows, and movement traces, platforms can [calculate traffic signal cycles](#), pedestrian flow patterns, and infrastructure operating rhythms. Given sufficient data, these inputs could be used to [locate sensitive facilities](#). As [noted in a report](#) by Taiwan media outlet TVBS, correspondent Lin En-ru 林恩

如 was able to find the exact location of military infrastructure in Taiwan through Amap. This illustrates the dual-use character of geospatial data: it is simultaneously a commercial asset and a strategic resource.

Central to the issue of data governance is [legal jurisdiction](#)—the dimension over which Taiwan currently [lacks regulatory control regarding risks and scale, focusing instead on case-by-case management rather than holistic governance](#). As former RAND researcher [Murray Scot Tanner has argued in *Lawfare*](#), China's *National Intelligence Law* (國家情報法) shifts legal obligations from intelligence “defense” to “offense,” explicitly requiring any individuals, organizations or institutions—whether private or state-funded ones—to assist authorities in conducting intelligence work. If a large volume of Taiwanese user data falls within the People's Republic of China's (PRC) legal jurisdiction, companies may face significant legal pressure to comply with PRC government data access requests. Yang Chang-Jung (楊長蓉), an assistant research fellow at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (國防安全研究院), [commented](#): “When civilian data enters a system governed by another state's national security or intelligence laws, it may be converted into intelligence assets of strategic value.”

Democratic Countries' Approaches to Limiting Cross-Border Data Leaks

Taking a broad view of how democratic countries address PRC involvement in native applications, their strategies are different yet converging. The United States passed the [Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act](#) (PAFACA) in 2024, mandating divestiture or a ban from the parent company. The European Union enacted the [Digital Services Act](#) (DSA), regulating platform transparency and systemic risk assessment.

Since the [Sino-Indian Galwan Valley conflict](#) in 2020, India has invoked Section 69A of the [Information Technology Act](#) to [ban more than 300 applications](#) progressively, including TikTok and WeChat.

In Taiwan, the government has invoked the *Cybersecurity Management Act* to identify Amap as a product threatening national cybersecurity, prohibiting its use across government institutions. However, the legislation primarily focuses on national-level regulation, with relatively [limited attention](#) to the

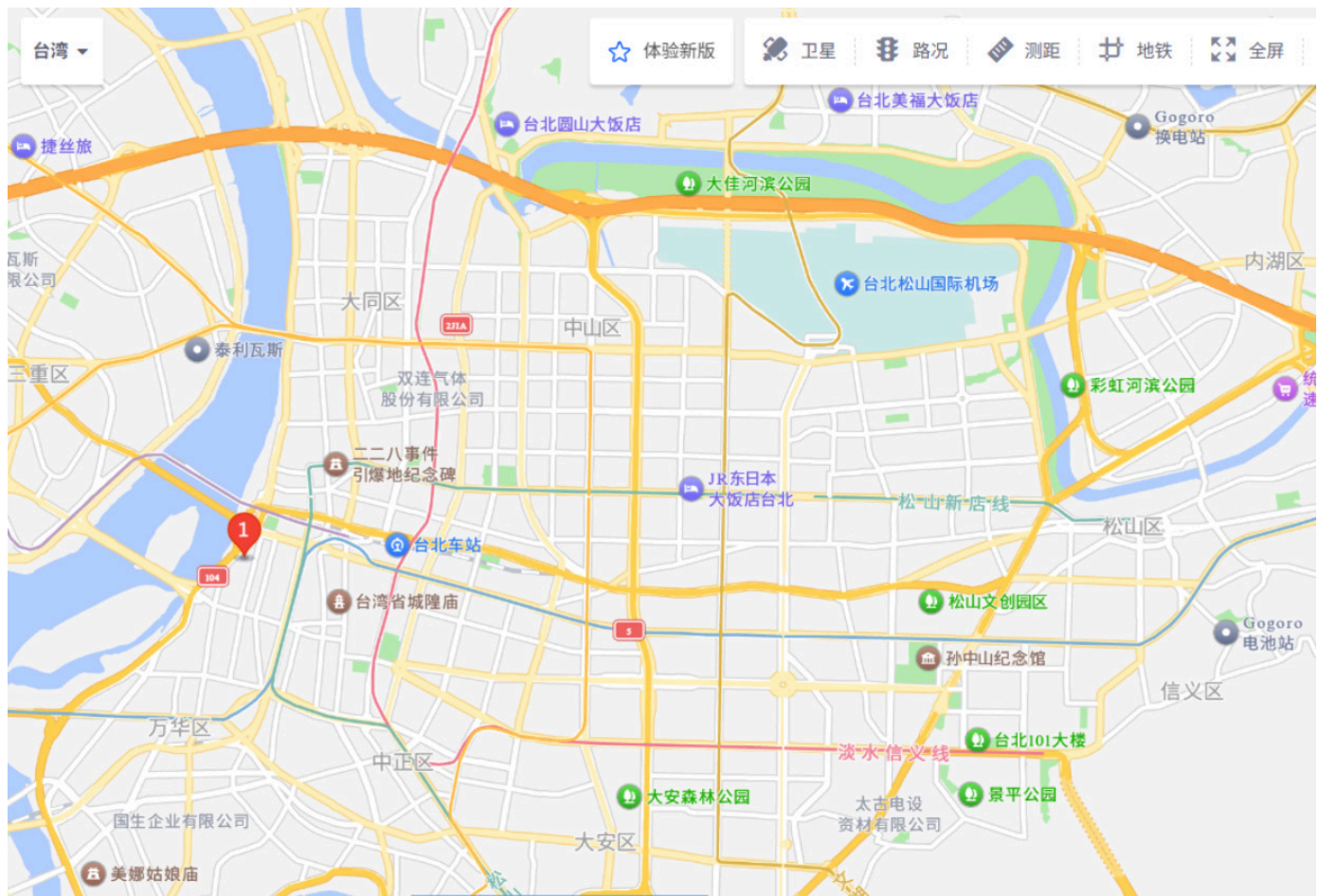


Image: A partial map of downtown Taipei, produced by the “Amap” navigation app. (Image source: [Amap.com](https://www.amap.com/))

disclosure of data flow and access permissions on private-sector platforms. More fundamentally, the current measures are designed for confronting individual cases—which come to the fore only after a risk is identified. Specifically, the risks associated with inferability from geospatial data are always accumulating, and it is therefore hard to regulate against vulnerabilities which have not yet been described.

Recommendations for Shoring Up Taiwan’s Geospatial Data Security

What Taiwan needs is not just a response to individual cases, but a systemic review framework. The following recommendations should therefore be considered:

First, establish tiered cybersecurity standards for software. The [Cybersecurity Management Act](#) applies primarily to government institutions, leaving civilian applications without a unified regulatory baseline. The government should specifically define which categories of data are considered sensitive geospa-

tial information—including real-time location data, high-precision mapping of areas adjacent to military facilities, and movement traces linked to personal identity—and impose tiered disclosure obligations on platforms accordingly.

Second, introduce mandatory auditing and data localization requirements. In the same vein as the European Union’s regulations for very large online platforms under the DSA, Taiwan can mandate platforms above a certain user threshold—or those handling sensitive geospatial data—to undergo periodic independent third-party audits disclosing storage locations, backend technical architecture, and explanation of cross-border data sharing arrangements. Currently, the Ministry of Digital Affairs already has the institutional standing to serve as the leading body, but lacks statutory authorization to conduct these measures.

Third, the shareholding structure of foreign investors should be incorporated into platform risk assessments. The existing framework for reviewing foreign

acquisitions focuses primarily on market competition, with data security treated as a secondary consideration. The [Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States \(CFIUS\)](#) could be a feasible reference for the Taiwanese government. CFIUS incorporates foreign ownership interest, control rights, and access to sensitive data [as risk assessment](#) criteria in platform acquisitions involving large volumes of user data.

Conclusion

The Amap and Grab cases not only present cybersecurity concerns, but raise the broader question of how democratic societies maintain governance capacity in a digital era. In recent years, Taiwan has prioritized semiconductor and hardware supply chain security, yet it still lacks a comprehensive policy framework for the strategic value of soft infrastructure such as mapping, location, and movement data. What the Amap controversy and the Grab acquisition expose is not merely a single-platform problem: instead, it reveals Taiwan's institutional gap in cross-border data and digital infrastructure governance.

The main point: The Amap controversy and Grab's acquisition of Foodpanda Taiwan reveal a shared institutional gap: Taiwan currently lacks the legal instruments to track, audit, or intervene in the accumulation of geospatial inferential capacity by platforms connected to foreign technology and legal frameworks. Taiwan should establish tiered cybersecurity standards for civilian applications, mandatory independent auditing for large-scale platforms, and incorporate foreign equity structures into data security reviews of platform acquisitions.

Four Years Later: The Legacy of the Nancy Pelosi Visit on Taiwan's Security

By: Thomas Shattuck

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In early August 2022, then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi [visited Taipei](#) to meet with then-Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen. The visit, originally scheduled for the spring but delayed due to Pelosi contracting COVID-19, marked the culmination of Pelosi's foreign policy career as a leader in the Democratic Party. Before losing the gavel after the November 2022 midterm elections in the United States, Pelosi wanted to cement her legacy as the first (and to date, only) female speaker of the House of Representatives by meeting with Asia's first democratically elected female leader who did not come from a political dynasty.

While Pelosi's visit to Taiwan fortified her legacy and served as a strong symbol of US congressional support for Taiwan, it had a stronger impact in another space: it changed the nature of People's Republic of China (PRC) military coercion against Taiwan and forever altered the cross-Strait status quo.

PRC Military Coercion before August 2022

Even before Pelosi visited Taiwan, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) routinely connected high-level political events to increasing military pressure on Taiwan through [military aircraft incursions](#) into Taiwan's declared air defense identification zone (ADIZ). After all, the ADIZ incursions started in direct response to visits to Taiwan in [August and September 2020](#) by, respectively, then-Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar and then-Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment Keith Krach.

It was in response to the Krach delegation that CCP Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin [denied the existence of the median line of the Taiwan Strait](#). The median line of the Taiwan Strait, dubbed the Davis Line, was established by General Benjamin O. Davis Jr. in 1955 in response to the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. The line was meant to deconflict military operations by the PRC and Taiwan to keep some semblance of stability between the two rivals. The line essentially divided the strait for decades as both sides tacitly accepted the division without formally accepting it. In 2019, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense clarified [its location of the line](#): 27°N, 122°E (north) and 23°N, 118°E (south). The line never held international legal status, but it kept the peace throughout and beyond the Cold War.

During a September 2020 People's Liberation Army

(PLA) military exercise, [22 military aircraft](#) crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait over the two-day operation. However, despite the PRC's rejection of the existence of the median line, no PRC military aircraft crossed the line for the following two years, until a [WZ-10 attack helicopter did so in May 2022](#).

There was relative [stability and predictability](#) in PLA movements and operations around Taiwan between September 2020 and July 2022. During this two-year period, the PLA routinely sent planes to breach Taiwan's southwestern ADIZ in the South China Sea. The PLA would use a pro-Taiwan political event, such as the signing of security- or economic-related memorandum of understanding, a visit by a foreign political figure, or a high-profile speech by Taiwan's president, to alter the cross-strait status quo by flying aircraft closer to Taiwan. However, during this time period, they refrained from crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait.

Despite rejecting its existence, the CCP generally abided by the line's demarcation even as it was increasing its pressure around Taiwan. Then, prior to the postponed Pelosi visit in July 2022, Taiwan Affairs Office Spokesperson Zhu Fenglian reiterated the CCP's refusal to accept the line's existence. [Zhu said](#), "The Taiwan region is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the so-called median line is non-existent." This statement was released in conjunction with the PLA patrol vessel *Haixun 06*'s assignment to the Taiwan Strait area.

PRC Military Coercion after August 2022

Pelosi's delayed visit to Taiwan provided Beijing with an opportune [pretext](#) to escalate its rejection of the declared median line. In August 2022, the PLA conducted a large-scale military exercise surrounding Taiwan, including six declared exclusion zones around the island. This was also the [first military exercise](#) in which the PLA would formally conduct operations off Taiwan's east coast. During the [Third Taiwan Strait crisis in 1996](#), the PLA did operate on Taiwan's northeast coast, but in August 2022, the east coast itself became a new theater of operation. (Editor's note: For more detailed analysis of the August 2022 PLA exercise, see previous GTI articles [here](#) and [here](#).)

On August 3, [the PLA sent 22 aircraft across the median line](#) of the Taiwan Strait—the same number of aircraft that crossed the line over two days

in September 2020. After August 3, the PLA did not relent. In August 2022 alone, [302 military aircraft](#) crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. [During the rest of 2022](#) (excluding August), a total of 263 aircraft crossed the median line, meaning that one month's activity surpassed the rest of that year's crossings. Notably, a significant majority of these crossings were conducted by fighter aircraft, such as the J-10, J-11, J-16, and Su-30—aircraft that would take only approximately 10 minutes to reach Taiwan proper from the median line. August 2022 remains the month with the highest number of PLA median crossings ever.

The exercise following Pelosi's visit sent a clear message marking the end of decades of observance of the median line of the Taiwan strait. In 2022, [565 aircraft](#) crossed the median line; in 2023, the number increased to [703](#). In 2024, the number doubled to [1,472 aircraft](#); in 2025, the number increased to [1,500](#).

At the time of the Pelosi visit, crossings of the median line made front-page headlines across international media because it marked a new phase of PRC military coercion of Taiwan. Questions arose around how much time decision makers in Taipei would have to act in the event of an attack; how far across the median line would Taiwan tolerate before responding to or intercepting encroachments; and the effect such regular movement might have on civil air traffic under this new normal.

Now, four years later, median line crossings are an afterthought. They're a part of the daily PRC coercion of Taiwan, and thus no longer newsworthy. Taiwan has seemingly adapted to this new phase of the cross-strait status quo.

Continuing the Pretext to Escalate Trap

Why did the decades-shattering decision by Beijing become background noise? The world moved on because the PLA did, too. Since the Pelosi visit and the [erasure of the median line](#) of the Taiwan Strait, Beijing has expanded its coercion of Taiwan in new ways.

In response to the April 2023 meeting in California between then-US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy and Taiwan's then-President Tsai Ing-wen, Beijing announced a "special joint patrol and inspection operation" in the Taiwan Strait along with the first [Joint Sword](#) military exercise.



Image: Then-US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (center) meeting with then-President Tsai Ing-wen (center-right) and other dignitaries at the Presidential Office Building in Taipei (August 3, 2022). (Image source: [US Speaker's Office / Wikimedia Commons](#))

In early 2024, Beijing turned its focus to the outlying island of Kinmen, in response to an accident between the Taiwan Coast Guard and illegal Chinese fishermen operating inside Kinmen's restricted waters. Like the Pelosi visit and the median line, Beijing used this incident to reject Kinmen's "[restricted waters](#)." Since then, the Chinese Coast Guard has operated inside Kinmen's restricted waters—and become a regular feature in major PLA exercises.

That is another legacy of the Pelosi visit: named military exercises. The Pelosi visit created a permissible situation for Beijing to formalize its military drills and incursions into exercises meant to improve interoperability of the PRC's military services and to practice feasible military contingencies around Taiwan: such as blockade, missile strike, and invasion scenarios.

There are many other examples of the PRC using a pro-Taiwan event as an excuse to increase its coercion against Taiwan. Waiting for opportune pretexts to escalate has worked well for the PRC: it can blame Taiwan or the United States for forcing it to act in self-defense. That excuse and projection of blame play well to China's international partners.

Beijing waited for a sufficiently high profile event to justify enacting its long-term plans to change the cross-Straits status quo and display the stark military imbalance between itself and Taiwan. This opportunity happened to be Pelosi's visit. If Pelosi had backed down due to pressure from the [Biden administration to cancel the visit](#), then Beijing would have selected some other event—such as Tsai's meeting with McCarthy, the inauguration of Lai, a visit by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, or a long list of other supposed offenses.

Conclusion

Beijing wants to dictate the level and types of engagements and exchanges that foreign countries can have with Taiwan. And if they violate those terms, then Beijing will use that event as a pretext to escalate an already-planned course of action, such as increased coercive military pressure.

However, the United States and Taiwan's allies and partners have for the most part rejected this *modus vivendi*. Foreign partners continue to visit Taiwan—even as Beijing continues to pressure them not to go, or sanction them for visiting, as was the case with

[New Zealand lawmakers in June 2026.](#)

Despite the military imbalance between Taiwan and China, Beijing's pressure campaign does not always result in total victory. Beijing used a variety of economic tools to coerce Lithuania after Taipei and Vilnius announced in 2021 that they would [open unofficial representative offices in each other's capitals](#). However, Lithuania did not back down—despite some teetering and doubts—and Beijing finally backed down in June 2026 with the [establishment of diplomatic relations at the charges d'affaires level](#). Lithuania has made no apparent concessions related to Taiwan in response, though there is still time for Vilnius to [appease Beijing](#). There is a clear lesson in this: standing up to Beijing can expose its weaknesses and defeat the narrative that it is all powerful.

Four years after Beijing used Pelosi's visit as a pretext to escalate in the Taiwan Strait, countries have started to be more supportive of Taiwan, and to reject PRC narratives. There is still much progress to be made, but the Pelosi visit exposed the PRC's machinations about Taiwan for the world to see.

The main point: The People's Republic of China used the August 2022 visit to Taipei by then-US House Speaker as a pretext to escalate in the Taiwan Strait. As cross-Strait relations have continued to deteriorate since, Beijing's actions have exposed a simple truth: it will use any excuse to increase its military coercion of Taiwan.

Beyond False Comparisons: Why Taiwan and the Malvinas Are Not the Same

By: Jessica Shiao

Jessica Shiao is a Research Associate at the Global Taiwan Institute.

In April 2024, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Wang Yi (王毅) [held a public meeting with his Argentine counterpart](#), Diana Mondino, in response to months of speculation that Argentina and Taiwan might conduct a rapprochement. Prior to the meeting, reports had [suggested](#) that representatives from Taiwan were seeking to facilitate improved relations between Taipei and Buenos Aires. The Wang-Mondino meeting, held in Beijing, concluded with both govern-

ments reaffirming their mutual diplomatic positions: the PRC reiterated its support for [Argentina's claim over the Malvinas \(Falkland\) Islands](#), while [Argentina reaffirmed its support for its One China policy](#) and its recognition of "Taiwan as part of China."

This diplomatic exchange reflected a broader tendency in Argentine [political](#) and [academic](#) discourse to draw parallels between the [Malvinas dispute](#)—involving Argentina and the United Kingdom—and the question of Taiwan's sovereignty. However, such comparisons often oversimplify the fundamentally different historical, legal, and geopolitical foundations of the two cases. Whereas the Malvinas dispute is framed by Argentina within the context of [decolonization](#), the Taiwan issue emerges from competing claims of political legitimacy and contemporary great power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific. Despite these distinctions, support for one position is frequently portrayed by the PRC as [necessarily requiring support for the other](#).

In this context, Beijing has been able to [strategically leverage](#) Argentina's [adherence to the One China principle](#) in ways that reinforce its own diplomatic objectives. By framing support for Argentina's Malvinas claim as part of a [broader solidarity among Global South nations](#), the PRC has strengthened a narrative in which Argentina's position on Taiwan becomes explicitly tied to continued Chinese political backing.

This article argues that the analogy between Taiwan and Malvinas is analytically flawed and diplomatically counterproductive. The comparison obscures the distinct nature of both disputes and limits Argentina's ability to pursue pragmatic engagement with Taiwan in areas such as technology, trade, education, and human capital development. Strengthening unofficial ties with Taiwan would not require Argentina to abandon its Malvinas claim. Rather, greater engagement with Taiwan could provide economic and technological opportunities consistent with President Javier [Milei's emphasis on innovation, human capital formation](#); and could foster closer [alignment with the United States](#) and [other like-minded partners](#).

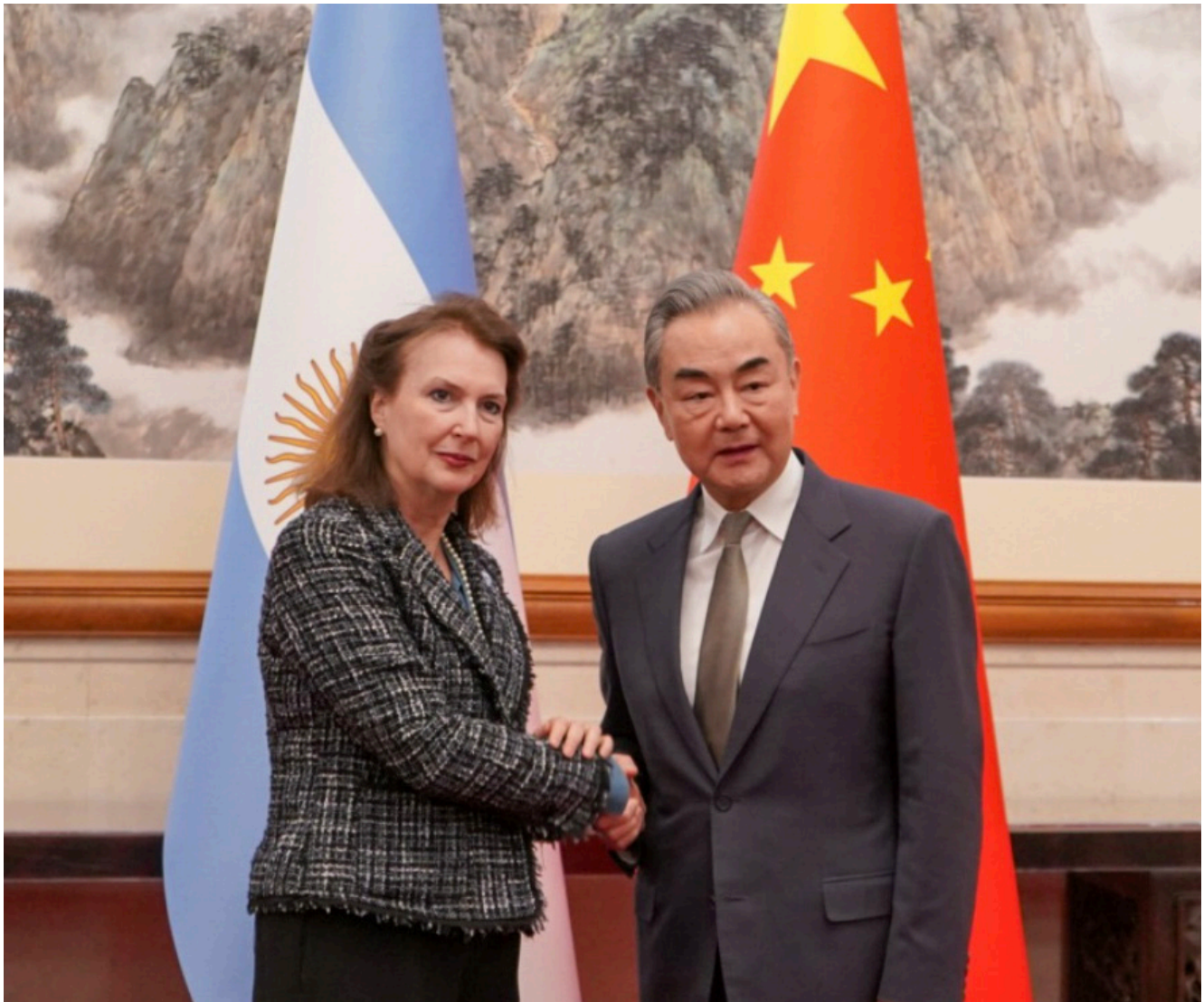


Image: Former Argentine Foreign Minister Diana Mondino meets with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in April 2024. (Image source: [Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#))

The Malvinas: A Dispute Rooted in Colonial Succession and Uti Possidetis Iuris

Argentina's position on the Malvinas claim is grounded in history and public international law: the [inheritance of Spanish territorial rights](#) following independence; the principle of *uti possidetis iuris* [1]; the exercise of [government authority and control](#) over the islands; and the Argentine government's [continuous protests](#) against British occupation.

According to the Argentine National Archives' [maps](#), [records](#), and [government communiqués](#), the Malvinas formed part of the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata—an administrative unit encompassing Argentina as well—under Spain's colonial administration.

Following the [1810 Revolution](#) and the [1816 Independence](#), Argentina inherited the territorial boundaries of the Spanish colonial administrative units from which it emerged, consistent with the principle of *uti possidetis iuris*. From this perspective, the Malvinas sovereignty claim derives from Argentina's right to take up territories formerly under Spanish colonial control.

Additionally, [Argentina exercised effective governmental authority](#) over the islands after it gained independence. Between 1810 and 1833, the Argentinian government carried out administrative acts, appointed local authorities, and asserted jurisdiction over the territory. When [British forces occupied Puerto Soledad on the Malvinas in 1833](#)—gaining

effective control over the islands—Argentina immediately [protested](#) the action and has maintained its claim through diplomatic channels ever since. Consequently, Argentina [characterizes](#) the British occupation as the interruption of its existing exercise of sovereignty.

Successive governments in Buenos Aires continued to [pursue negotiations](#) with the United Kingdom over the dispute. The [1976-1983 Argentinian military junta's decision to occupy the islands on April 2, 1982](#), did not mark the beginning of Argentina's sovereignty claim. Rather, the [conflict with the United Kingdom](#)—which ended with Argentina's surrender after approximately two months of warfare—represented just one episode in a dispute that had existed for more than a century. Following the war, [Argentina resumed its diplomatic efforts](#) and has continued to [raise the issue](#) in international fora: including by the islands' inclusion on the [United Nations list of non-self-governing territories](#), and by [rejecting British acts](#) asserted as evidence of sovereignty.

Internationally, the dispute has been addressed within UN decolonization frameworks. The 1965 [General Assembly Resolution 2065](#) acknowledged the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom, and called upon both parties to pursue a peaceful solution through negotiations. The UN Special Committee on Decolonization [continues to consider](#) the issue, while the Organization of American States has likewise repeatedly [characterized](#) the matter as a sovereignty dispute and supported a negotiated settlement. As a result, the Malvinas question has for decades been embedded within an international legal and diplomatic framework centered on decolonization and the peaceful resolution of a bilateral sovereignty dispute.

Taiwan: A Different Historical and Legal Trajectory

The historical and legal circumstances surrounding Taiwan's sovereignty differ fundamentally from those of the Malvinas. Instead of arising from an outright decolonization question, Taiwan's status developed through a complex series of events: the fall of China's Qing Dynasty, the Japanese colonial era and its collapse at the end of World War II, the Chinese Civil

War, and the subsequent existence of two governments across the Strait after 1949.

Taiwan, historically known in the West as Formosa Island, was [controlled](#) by the Qing Empire and became a province in 1885. Following the Qing Empire's [defeat](#) in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Empire ceded Taiwan and the Penghu Islands to Japan under the 1895 [Treaty of Shimonoseki](#). After Japan [surrendered](#) in 1945 at the close of World War II, the Republic of China (ROC)—[established in 1912](#) after the overthrow of the Qing Empire—assumed administrative control over Taiwan. The Chinese Civil War then culminated in the establishment of the PRC in 1949, with the ROC government relocating to Taiwan. Since 1945, the ROC has continuously exercised effective governmental authority over Taiwan and the islands under its administration.

Accordingly, Taiwan's circumstances differ fundamentally from those of the Malvinas. Argentina's claim is based on arguments concerning colonial succession, inherited territorial rights, and the alleged interruption of an existing exercise of sovereignty following the British occupation in 1833. By contrast, since its founding in 1949 the PRC [has never exercised effective governmental control over Taiwan](#). Consequently, the issue is not analogous to the Malvinas case, which concerns the Argentinian government's loss of its pre-existing administration of the islands to a colonial power.

Within international legal frameworks, Taiwan likewise occupies a different position. It has not been treated by the United Nations as a decolonization question. Rather, the 1971 [General Assembly Resolution 2758](#)—frequently pointed to by Beijing as the basis for its territorial claim to Taiwan—merely resolved the question of which government would represent “China” at the UN by recognizing the representatives of the PRC as “the only lawful representatives of China” to the organization. However, the resolution did not mention Taiwan, [nor did it address](#) Taiwan's territorial sovereignty. Therefore, the issue of Taiwan is fundamentally different from the decolonization framework that has long defined the Malvinas dispute.

The PRC's Strategic Use of the Taiwan-Malvinas

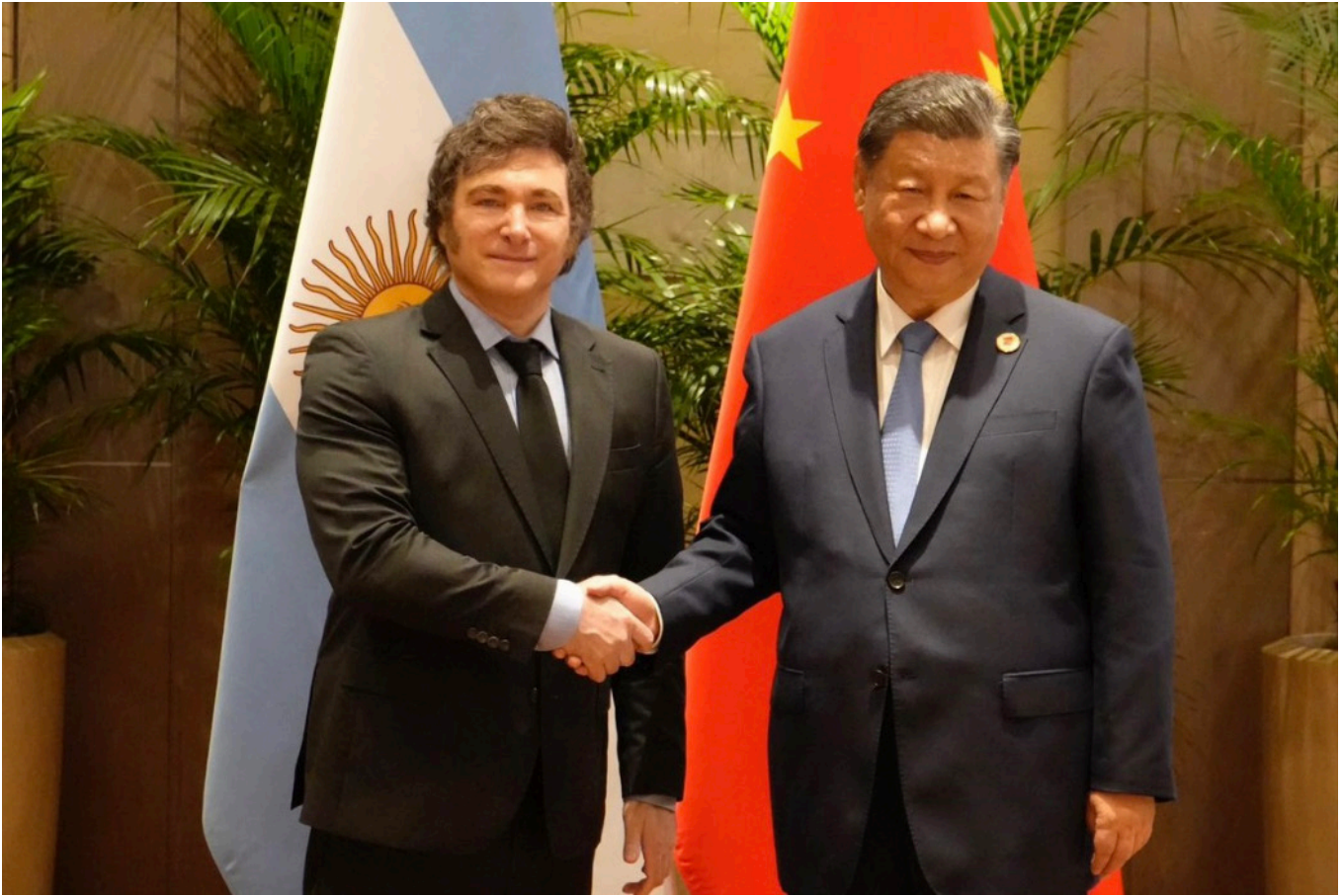


Image: Argentine President Javier Milei meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in November 2024. (Image source: [Office of the President of Argentina](#))

Analogy

The aforementioned context demonstrates why equating Taiwan and the Malvinas is flawed. Treating the two cases as analogous conflates distinct historical processes and legal questions.

This is particularly relevant in Argentina's relations with Taiwan. Buenos Aires [officially recognized the PRC in 1972](#), a decade before the 1982 war with the United Kingdom, and has not maintained formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan since then. Nevertheless, both countries have longstanding economic, commercial, and cultural relations through representative offices in [Taipei](#) (Oficina de Representación Comercial y Cultural en Taiwan) and [Buenos Aires](#) (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Argentina, 駐阿根廷台北商務文化辦事處).

However, Beijing has taken advantage of the Malvinas dispute through [diplomatic messaging](#) centered

on anti-colonialism, sovereignty, and Global South solidarity. PRC [discourse](#) frequently emphasizes shared historical experiences of foreign intervention and national humiliation, framing support for Argentina's Malvinas claim as part of a broader partnership among developing nations resisting Western dominance. This narrative has proven politically influential within Argentina, as it [links](#) continued PRC support for the Malvinas claim to Argentina's adherence to its One China policy and its avoidance of deeper engagement with Taiwan. By presenting the two issues as parallel questions of territorial integrity, the PRC advances a comparison that serves its diplomatic interests—despite the significant historical and legal differences between the two cases.

The political consequences of this framing has become particularly visible during the administration of President Milei. During his presidential campaign, Milei [publicly criticized the PRC](#), stating he “would not do business with Communists,” and initially



Image: Former Argentine Congressman José Luis Espert (second from left) meets with Taiwanese Representative to Argentina Florencia Miao-hung Hsie (second from right), accompanied by Counsellor Roger Li (left) and Federalism and Freedom Foundation founder José Guillermo Godoy (right). (Image source: [X/José Luis Espert](#))

signaled the possibility of reorienting Argentina's foreign policy toward closer [alignment with the United States](#). [Rumors](#) of expanded engagement with Taiwan generated strong reactions among Argentine commentators and policymakers, some of whom warned that such engagement could jeopardize [PRC financial cooperation](#), including [currency swap agreements](#). Commentators also [cautioned](#) that closer ties with Taiwan could imperil Beijing's diplomatic backing on the Malvinas issue.

Although the Milei Administration ultimately [re-affirmed](#) Argentina's adherence to the One China principle, the episode illustrated the degree to which the Taiwan-Malvinas analogy [constrains Argentina's diplomatic flexibility](#). It also demonstrated how interaction with Taiwan continues to be treated as politically sensitive, despite Argentina already maintaining extensive economic and cultural ties with Taiwan.

Today, Taiwan [functions](#) as any other self-governing democratic country with autonomous institutions, competitive elections, its own armed forces, passport system, and independent economic administration. Since the Malvinas and Taiwanese disputes are not synonymous, the mere presence of a sovereignty issue surrounding Taiwan should not deter Argentina from expanding trade, technology, education, investment, and scientific cooperation with the island. Rather, greater engagement could complement Milei's [objectives](#) of attracting investment, strengthening human capital, diversifying technological partnerships, and [deepening relations](#) with economies in the Indo-Pacific region.

Toward a More Pragmatic Foreign Policy

The comparison between Malvinas and Taiwan is ultimately a flawed equivalence that obscures the distinct historical, legal, and geopolitical dimensions of both issues. Treating these cases as interchangeable oversimplifies the differences between them, and creates unnecessary constraints on Argentina's foreign policy.

Argentina already engages with Taiwan through economic, academic, and cultural activity, while at the same time recognizing the PRC. However, excessive political sensitivity surrounding engagement with Taiwan constrains Argentine opportunities of cooperation. For instance, Taiwanese [humanitarian assistance for basic necessities](#) to vulnerable communities have drawn criticism that such engagement could undermine China's support for Argentina's Malvinas claim. Similarly, [meetings](#) between Taiwan's representative and Argentine legislators have generated political backlash because of their perceived implications for relations with Beijing. Moreover, [parliamentary exchanges](#) have likewise remained politically sensitive, despite Taiwan's invitations for Argentine members of Congress to participate in exchange visits.

Engaging with Taiwan should be interpreted as part of a broader strategy of diversified international engagement and foreign policy flexibility. Indeed, expanding unofficial engagement with Taiwan preserves Buenos Aires' room for diplomatic maneuver—and, ultimately, allows Argentina to enhance its own

sovereignty.

The main point: Argentina can maintain its Malvinas claim while expanding economic, technological, and cultural ties with Taiwan. Equating sovereignty disputes over the Malvinas and Taiwan is analytically flawed and generates missed opportunities in bilateral relations between the two nations.

[1] The [principle of *uti posseditis iuris*](#) holds that independent states retain the territorial boundaries of the colonial administrative units from which they emerged. The principle has been recognized in international jurisprudence as a means of preserving the territorial *status quo* at the moment of decolonization and, importantly, of giving precedence to legal title over mere effective possession.
