

Taiwan's Strategic Role in Coping with China's Expansionism: In the Wake of Nine-in-One Elections, 2018

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Abstract

The rise of China has posed threats toward not only Taiwan and neighboring countries, but it also has challenged US hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region. Exposed to China's penetration and disturbances, Taiwan's open society has offered easy access for Beijing's political manipulation and psychological intimidation via the Three Wars, and its democracy has become fertile soil for internal opposition and confrontation. Taiwan also suffers from China's divide-and-rule and carrot-and-stick tactics. Since Taiwan is located at the axis of the First Island Chain, Taiwan's fragility would become a point of penetration for Chinese expansionism. Now is the time for the US-led democracies to pay more attention to Taiwan's democratic development, *i.e.*, the implications of the nine-in-one elections held in November 2018 and the prospects of the coming presidential and legislative elections to be held in January 2019. Besides, the best defense is a good offense. Taiwan and US-led democracies have to work together in exporting democracy to China. Taiwan can be a good strategic partner for the US in conducting its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Keywords: Rise of China, Three Wars, First Island Chain, Elections, Indo-Pacific Strategy

I. The Revival of China Factors after Taiwan's 9-in-1 Elections

Since President Tsai Ing-wen was inaugurated on May 20, 2016, Beijing has shut all official channels across the Taiwan Strait. Beijing, however, has never closed its

doors to the Blue camp and has tried very hard to promote socio-economic exchanges between China and the Blue-ruled areas, pro-unification groups, and individuals. Beijing also has poured enormous resources into penetrating Taiwan through its Fifth Columns all over Taiwan. Dramatically, Taiwan's landscape has turned its color back to Blue from the once-dominant Green. On November 24, 2018, in the "nine-in-one" local elections for mayoral and county magistrate seats, the opposition Kuomintang (KMT) won 15, while the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lost seven of the 13 cities it previously held, leaving it with only six (See Figure 1). The landslide loss of the DPP has created an opportunity for the revival of cross-Strait exchanges between the Blue and the Red, as well as creating more room for Beijing to maneuver its resources to reincorporate Taiwan into China's orbit.

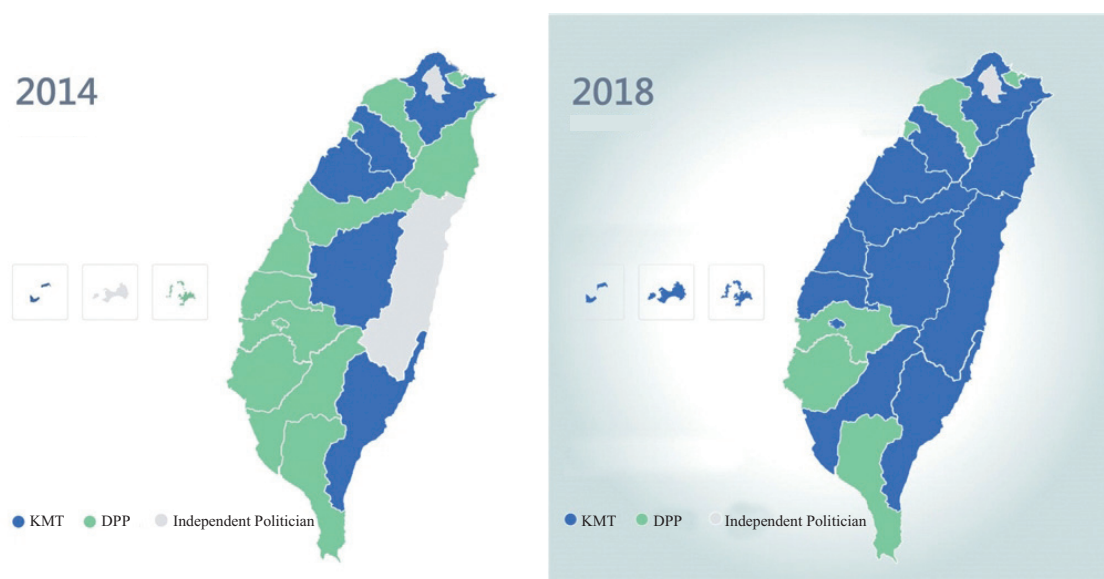


Figure 1. Results of 2018 9-in-1 Local Election

Source: "Results of the 9-in-1 election: the large shift of Blue and Green districts," *Central News Agency*, November 25, 2018, <<https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201811250031.aspx>>.

On November 28, the director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, Liu Jieyi, publicly stated that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are "going closer and doing well is the direction of public opinion." He wished that economic and cultural exchanges across the Taiwan Strait could be continued and strengthened, based on the "1992 Consensus." Under the premise of reunification between the two sides, he supported any politician

using the Chinese market to strengthen Taiwan's economy. On December 10, 2018, the county magistrate of Penghu County, Lai Fengwei, kicked off the first visit to China after the nine-in-one elections. He claimed that the trip was rich in travel and he promised a model of cross-Strait exchanges, which could become a new breakthrough for the two sides of the strait. Afterwards, many new governors flocked to China: Jinmen County Governor Yang Zhenyu, January 27; Lianjiang County Governor Liu Zengying, February 13; Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu, March 21; Nantou County Governor Lin Min gxi, March 27; Yilan County Governor Lin Zimiao, April 16, 2019.

Among the visiting governors, the popular Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu is the most eye-catching, controversial, and highly political person. He advocated "0 points in politics, but 100 points in economics," when visiting Hong Kong, Macao, Shenzhen, and Xiamen. He was not concerned about the political symbols or political rituals while he was receiving high-level hosts everywhere. His journey started from Hong Kong and Macao before going to Shenzhen and Xiamen. On March 23, he met with Director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Wang Zhimin for a dinner after a reception with Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam. On March 24, the mayor met with Macao Chief Executive Fernando Chui Saion and Fu Ziyang, director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Macao SAR. March 25, Han met with a high-ranking Chinese official, Director Liu Jieyi, responsible for Taiwan affairs, at a golf club in Shenzhen. During the meeting, Han reiterated that cross-Strait interactions would be smoother and more peaceful under the "1992 Consensus," whether in culture, economy, or sports. He also thanked Liu's office for taking care of millions of Taiwanese living or working in China. At the last stop, Xiamen, he focused more on promoting trade, tourism, and investment. Finally, he gained about NT\$5.2 billion in orders from the trips.

Obviously, the order of Han's visits in Hong Kong, Macao, Shenzhen, and Xiamen; the people he met; and the gestures and language presented by both sides implicitly endorsed the symbolic meanings of "one country, two systems." The order of the process also showed a symbolic procedure of his fulfilling ancient China's tributary system. Apparently, Beijing intended to differentiate politics from economics by showing its two-faced strategy: extending Han a grand reception, while having PLA fighters cross the median line of the Taiwan Strait three days after Han concluded his tribute tours (See Figure 2 & Figure 3). Another reasonable doubt is that Beijing

was testifying to Han's credibility and the reliability of what Han was saying during the visits. Beijing was not going to send a wrong message to Taiwanese; Beijing was just doing whatever was in its own favor. Due to US involvement in Taiwan's affairs, it is impossible for Beijing to hope only for economic exchanges without regard to visitors' political commitments and intentions.

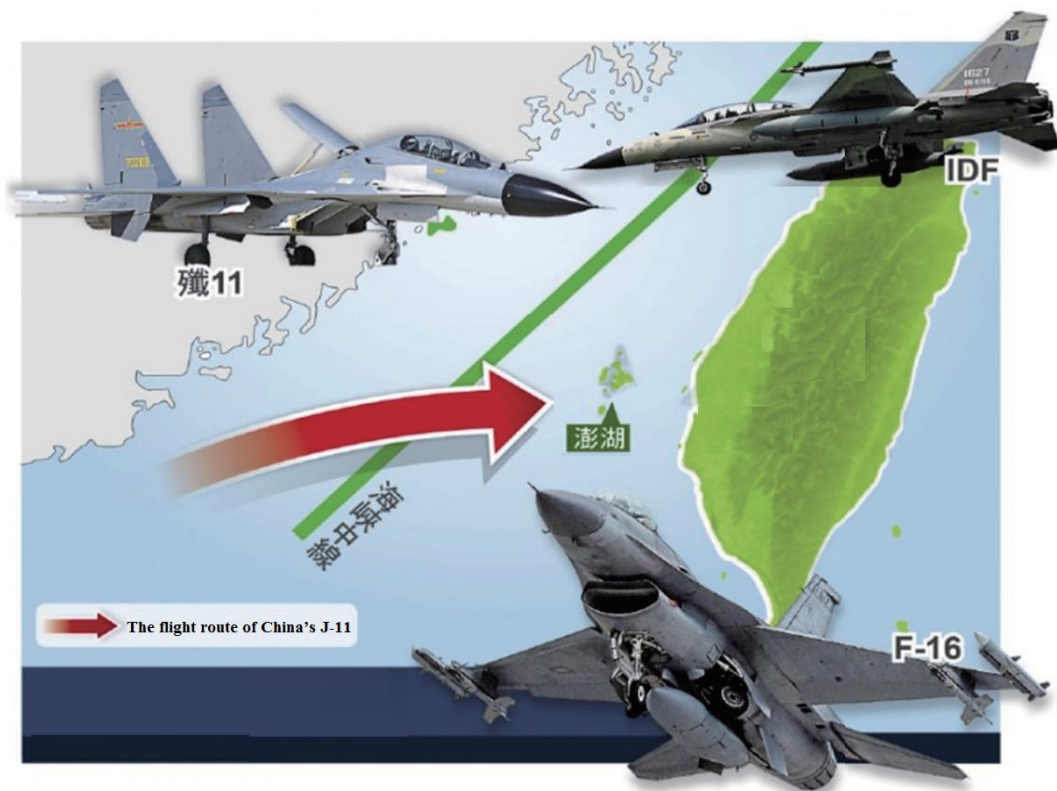


Figure 2. PLA Fighters Cross the Median Line of the Taiwan Strait, March 31, 2019

Source: 羅添斌, 呂伊萱, 楊淳卉, 〈共機艦越界恐成常態「要讓台海成內海」〉, 《自由時報》, April 1, 2019, <<https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/1278248>>.



Figure 3. China's Jets that Crossed into Taiwan Airspace: Not a First; Maybe Not the Last

Source: Ralph Jennings, "China's Jets that Crossed into Taiwan Airspace: Not a First; Maybe Not the Last," *VOA*, April 3, 2019, <<https://www.voanews.com/a/china-taiwan-airspace/4859810.html>>.

II. Xi's Carrot-and-Stick Approach toward Taiwan

1. Xi's Uniqueness of His Personal Character

Although the internal and external challenges that Xi faces are unprecedented, his centralized leadership also is without comparison. Before 1997, Jiang Zemin still took orders from Deng Xiaoping; since 2004, Hu Jin-tao was in the shadow of Jiang. Xi could get rid of the overlord's control quickly. He assumed leadership of nine committees or task forces, substantially controlling the decision-making process of the PRC administration (See Figure 4).



Figure 4. China's Leading Group

Source: 〈媒體列舉習近平目前擔任職務〉, 《香港文匯網》, June 14, 2014, <<http://news.wenweipo.com/2014/06/14/IN1406140014.htm>>.

The abolishment of the regulation over the term of office of the president of China stipulated in the constitution also pushes Xi to the peak of power; he has become a substantial emperor with the trinity of the president of the country, the general secretary of the party, and the chairman of the military commission in China. Accordingly, there is no doubt that cross-Strait relations, as a key issue of China's national development, will be determined mostly by Xi for the coming decade. Nevertheless, in view of the socialization of Xi's background, his personal character is extremely mixed. On one hand, cultivated by era of the Cultural Revolution, his militant capacity for fighting is unimaginable, but, enjoying the booming economy since the early 1980s, he also tends to be self-constrained in order to safeguard China's economic achievements.

Besides, learning from the collapse of the Soviet Union, like other Chinese leaders, Xi maintains that western-style democratic reforms are inconsistent with China's national conditions; changes must be curbed in a stable architecture. At the 4th Plenary Session of the 18th Party Congress, he announced that the “rule of law” comprehensively be put forward as the top-level design and overall deployment of the state. Xi believes “When those who uphold the law are strong, the state is strong.”¹

Judging from Xi's style of doing things, although he promotes nationalism, he keeps a relatively low profile. He appears to be an idealist. Sometimes, in reaction to external factors, he may say radical things, but the methods and measures for his work are flexible and pragmatic.²

2. Xi's Uniqueness of His Taiwan Policy

An unequivocal claim of the inevitability of unification across the Taiwan Strait has been a constant theme for any Chinese leader. Over decades, it has become a ritual in any important political occasion for the Chinese Communist Party. At the 19th Party Congress held on November 18, 2017, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged that “We have firm will, full confidence, and sufficient capability to defeat any form of Taiwan independence secession plot. We will never allow any person, any organization, or any political party to split any part of the Chinese territory from China at any time or in any form.” The rhetoric of the claims for unification might differ, but the basic foundation based upon One China principle has never changed. Nevertheless, different from his predecessor, Xi and his trusted aides, as fans of Maoism during Cultural Revolution, are taking a more radical approach in consolidating power, combating institutional corruption, and even his aspirations for Taiwan policy.

On January 2, 2019, Xi delivered a speech with five points to mark the 40th anniversary of China's Taiwan policy made on January 1, 1979. Both speeches were entitled “Messages to Compatriots in Taiwan,” and Xi's five points were: Taiwan and

1. 〈中共三中全會閉幕 設國安委和改革小組〉,《BBC中文網》, November 12, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/china/2013/11/131112_china_cpc_meeting_>.

2. 顏建發,〈習近平對台政策的可能架構與內涵〉,《台灣國際研究季刊》, Winter 2013, Vol. 9, No. 4, p. 42.

China (1) must join hands to facilitate the reinvigoration of Chinese people and realize the goal of peaceful unification; (2) explore a proposal for Taiwan regarding “one country, two systems” so as to enrich the practice of peaceful unification; (3) adhere to the “One-China” principle to maintain the prospect of peaceful unification; (4) deepen the development of cross-Strait integration and consolidate the foundation of peaceful unification; (5) achieve spiritual harmony and enhance a unified identity.

Xi asserted that the principles of “peaceful reunification” and “one country, two systems” are the best approach to realizing national reunification. He proposed that the mainland and Taiwan should conduct “democratic consultations” on cross-Strait relations and the future of the nation and should establish institutional arrangements for peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. For him, under the guidance of the CCP, “democratic consultations” may bring in representatives from Taiwanese society to mutually negotiate peaceful unification.

Nevertheless, China has not renounced the use of force to annex Taiwan. Chinese leaders said that “we do not promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option to use all necessary measures” to achieve this goal and prevent Taiwan independence. For them, “the use of force was aimed at foreign forces seeking to interfere Taiwan issue and those who advocate Taiwanese independence”; “we are not targeting our compatriots in Taiwan.”

III. The Thorny Challenges of the Tsai Ing-wen Administration

In the wake of China’s economic rise, the second DPP administration run by Tsai Ing-wen seems to be encountering more difficulties from China than her predecessor Chen Shui-bian in the first DPP administration (2000-2008). The landslide defeats in the “nine-in-one” local elections held on November 24, 2018, have made Tsai almost a lame president and struggle for the coming election for her second term in 2020.

Tsai was blamed for her poor economic performance and mismanagement of reform issues. The economy is not the only issue, but it is a very significant one. Owing to the stalemate of cross-Strait relations, Tsai’s rejection of the One-China principle has brought the Blue Camp more business opportunities from China. Cross-Strait economic exchanges have become the weakness of the Green camp and the

strength for Red-Blue collaborations during the elections. The scholars of China's official think tanks used to believe that only the DPP's failure in the elections would make the DPP adjust its own cross-Strait policy.³ For Beijing, the DPP's failure in the nine-in-one elections has become a golden chance for Beijing to make the DPP likely to be defeated in the coming presidential and legislative elections in 2020.

Xi understands that the Tsai government will not accept the high-standard appeal of "one country, two systems," in his Five Points, so he also has made a low-standard initiative by saying that "We can take the lead in realizing the water supply, power supply, ventilation, and bridges between Kinmen and Matsu along the coastal areas of Fujian." Besides, "we must promote cross-Strait cultural education, medical and health cooperation, social security and sharing of public resources, and support cross-Strait proximity or conditions." He added that "no matter how many interferences are encountered, exchanges between cross-Strait compatriots cannot be stopped, be broken, and be less." Clearly rejecting official contacts with the DPP government, Beijing is taking a unilateral approach inducing pro-China areas by economic incentives. Even though Beijing may not cast too many hopes on the KMT, it will "do more" than "say more" and try to help the KMT, its united front, triumph. Beijing will consider how to stabilize the forces of the unification hardliners inside Taiwan and try to make the Blue camp do more things conducive to cross-Strait exchanges. Beijing will focus more on cross-Strait trade and exchanges and introduce more measures to benefit pro-unification Taiwanese, thereby preventing Taiwan from moving toward *de jure* independence. Beijing will try to curb cross-Strait exchanges in the given economic structure co-shaped by former President Hu Jin-tao as well as incumbent President Xi Jinping of the PRC and former President Ma Ying-jeou of the ROC (2008-2016). With their previous efforts, apparently Taiwan had been further locked within the strategic framework of Beijing's Taiwan policy.

Beijing is likely to take its conventional practice of "I take the initiative, in my favor," as the guideline for enriching its policy toward Taiwan. Except for deepening its relations with the Pan-blue camp, Beijing has bypassed political parties and has

3. 嚴安林,〈台灣「九合一」選舉對兩岸關係有影響〉,《中國評論新聞網》, November 19, 2014, <<http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1034/7/7/0/103477006.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=103477006>>.

penetrated the grassroots communities, small businesses, media, academics, and other social and cultural groups, cultivating their common interests and networks. Through exchanges, relations across the Taiwan Strait have been strengthened and consolidated. It is possible to see Beijing use some “patriotic” Chinese spouses in Taiwan and pro-unification Taiwanese businesspeople to serve its tactical missions in helping the pro-China candidates during election campaigns.

Beijing will continue its support for KMT rule in Taiwan and will treat the DPP with carrots and sticks so that Taiwan’s major political direction may be confined to the orbit set by Beijing. Beijing understands that a too tough policy will fiercely offend the Taiwan public. Before Beijing can integrate Taiwan fully into its system, it would not really take a military action. Beijing would rather make a psychological threat through military exercises. As Sun Tzu called “to defeat the enemy without combat,” Chinese leaders are good at playing psychological warfare. In view of maintaining stable development of China, Xi may use more psychological warfare, mixing threats and inducements, toward Taiwan. Clearly, over the past two years, Xi has not only been tough rhetorically, but also has dispatched fighter jets across the median line of the Taiwan Strait and has sent warships to circle Taiwan. It has conducted military drills to psychologically intimidate the Tsai government and Taiwanese.

Besides, Beijing government also has tried very hard to object to interference of foreign forces and has tested the intentions of both the US and Japan by military drills. Although Beijing used to say that Taiwan is not an urgent issue on its political agenda, Beijing has become worried about the US long-term presence in Taiwan and its confrontational approach toward China; Beijing could sense that it has been strategically encircled by the US and its allies in this region. China may lose Taiwan forever.⁴

IV. China Rising Poses a Threat to Democracies in the Asia-Pacific Region

The rise of China has brought a huge impact on the politico-economic structures of East Asia in many spheres of life since early 2000. The problems concerning the

4. 顏建發,《台灣的選擇：亞太秩序與兩岸政經的新平衡》(臺北：新銳文創，2014), p. 192.

world are not the changes themselves but the directions that reverse democratic institutions and universal values shared by like-minded democracies. Above all, neighboring countries depending on high levels of trade with China have been in a dilemma over how to protect their national interests without being threatened by China's growing influence. China's expanding influence is complicating strategic calculations throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Centered around Taiwan, the axis of the First Island Chain, China's ambitious presence in the South China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and the South Pacific has aroused grave concern in neighboring countries, the US, and the EU (See Figure 5).

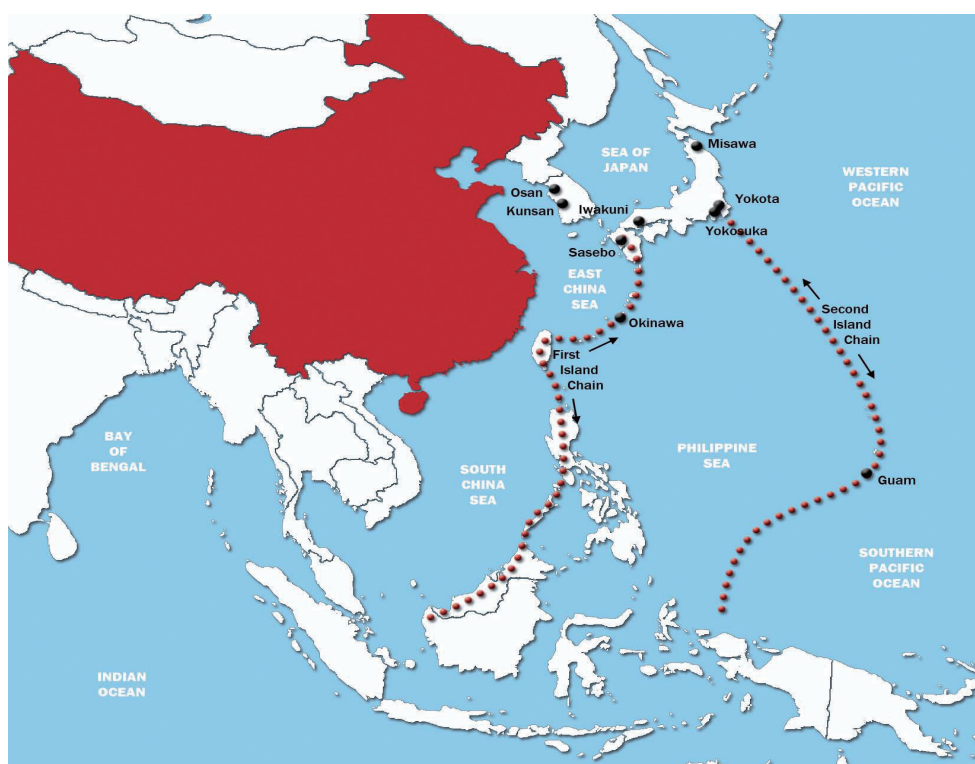


Figure 5. Taiwan Is located at the Axis of the First Island Chain

Source: "China's ADIZ is a strategic move to control First Island Chain," December 25, 2013, *Consortium of Defense Analysts*, <<https://cofda.wordpress.com/2013/12/25/chinas-adiz-is-a-strategic-move-to-control-first-island-chain/>>.

In the South China Sea, it has been reported that China had made 2,900 acres of land from December 2013 to the end of June 2015. China's expansionist move sparked several ASEAN claimants' strong dissatisfaction, especially from the Philippines

and Vietnam. The US also expressed serious concern in terms of free navigation. On July 12, 2016, the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that China's claim of the nine-dotted line in the South China Sea has no legal basis; it also ruled that the disputed waters in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal are within the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, while the Chinese behavior is in violation of the sovereignty of the Philippines.

Although Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said that the Philippines hoped to keep a close friendship with China. The Philippines needs more money from China to build more roads from economic zones and farms to the markets. He said, "China has money; the US has no money." Under Duterte, the Philippine government has increasingly looked to building an economically beneficial relationship with Beijing by the end of 2018.⁵ Paradoxically, Duterte's realistic and flexible approach toward China may send confusing messages to the US allies, thus endangering US leadership in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, although it is true that Manila and Beijing are together exploring energy reserves, and Chinese investment in the Philippines has surged since 2016, the Trump-loving Duterte is not as anti-American as his spiel implies. The US remains the Philippines' second trading partner with exports to the US rising on his watch. Military activities between the two states also are expanding, and Duterte has permitted the building of new American military facilities in the Philippines. It is worth observing that Philippine-China relations have turned sour recently. On April 4, 2019, Duterte told China on Thursday to "lay off" an island occupied by Manila in the disputed South China Sea and said he would deploy his soldiers there if Beijing touches it (See Figure 6). He stressed that it is not a warning but rather a word of advice to a friend.⁶

5. Euan McKirdy, Ben Westcott, & Helen Regan, "Philippines' Duterte signals closer ties with China amid anger at outsize Beijing influence," *CNN*, November 21, 2018, <<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/11/20/asia/xi-duterte-china-philippines-intl/index.html>>.

6. "Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte tells China to 'lay off' island in disputed South China Sea," *Reuters*, April 5, 2019, <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3004758/philippine-president-rodriago-duterte-tells-china-lay-island>>.



Figure 6. The Disputed Island between Philippines and China

Source: "Duterte tells China to 'lay off' disputed island," *South China Sea News*, April 5, 2019, <<https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/subjects/south-china-sea.html>>.

In the South Pacific, in terms of exclusive economic zones (EEZs), it comprises small-island states in a vast ocean, thus having owned huge size of substantial interests and strategic influences. For example, countries like Kiribati have an EEZ almost the size of the continent of Australia. For China, the South China Sea and the South Pacific are strategically interconnected. China started to militarize the South China Sea in 2015, despite Chinese President Xi Jinping promising not to do so. China deployed advanced fighter jets and surface-to-air missiles in the Paracels, which also are claimed by Vietnam. In the Spratlys, Beijing has recently completed defense-related infrastructure, including runways for fighter jets (See Figure 7).



Figure 7. Beijing's Military Bases in South China Sea Are Ready for Use

Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "Fiery Cross Reef," March 9, 2017, *AMTI.CSIS*, <<https://amti.csis.org/%e6%b0%b8%e6%9a%91%e7%a4%81/?lang=zh-hant>>.

Then, it is worth noticing that China's militarization of South China Sea features has enhanced the capacities of its fighters to reach deep into the South Pacific, jeopardizing the security interests of neighboring stake-holders, including Taiwan, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, and the US. In addition, China has started to wield its influence via financial aid, political donations, and investment, paving strong commercial networks and following up with waves of Chinese migration to the region. China's fishing fleets also are increasing their presence in this area. It happens as a rule that a PLA Navy-related military objective finally emerges.

Regarding Chinese PLA's regular presence in the waters of the Taiwan Strait, the Miyako Strait, and the Bashi Channel, named as an "island encircling patrol" ever

since December 2017, it can be seen as a piece of the jigsaw puzzle of China's maritime expansionism. In this puzzle, without question, Taiwan shows its strategic significance for the democracies in the Asia-Pacific region.

With its "One Belt, One Road," China's recent expansionism explicitly has shown its "neo-colonial" ambitions. Simultaneously, under the Trump administration, Washington's hostility towards Beijing has been more strategic than tactical; the US could be preparing to take a more confrontational approach with China on issues beyond just the trade dispute. That approach will be comprehensive instead of being specific.

From this perspective, gradually, Taiwan and the US, Japan, Australia, as well as New Zealand, will have common interests in protecting their presence and influence in the South Pacific. China has eight diplomatic allies in this area, offering it strong geostrategic interests. China is the largest trading partner with Pacific Island countries, with trade totaling US\$8.2 billion in 2017. In military matters, it was reported that China is going to have a permanent presence by seeking a dock in its diplomatic ally, Vanuatu. As a unique phenomenon, China has been focusing on highly visible large infrastructure projects. China also has used its aid program as a vehicle for Chinese citizens and private sector to take root in the Pacific (See Figure 8). A nightmare for South Pacific nations will be emerging Chinese immigrants and the nations being likely to fall into a trap of debts that they are not able to pay back. In this regard, Taiwan can contribute something for its democratic allies. Taiwan has six diplomatic allies in this area, including Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Noru, Perak, Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu.

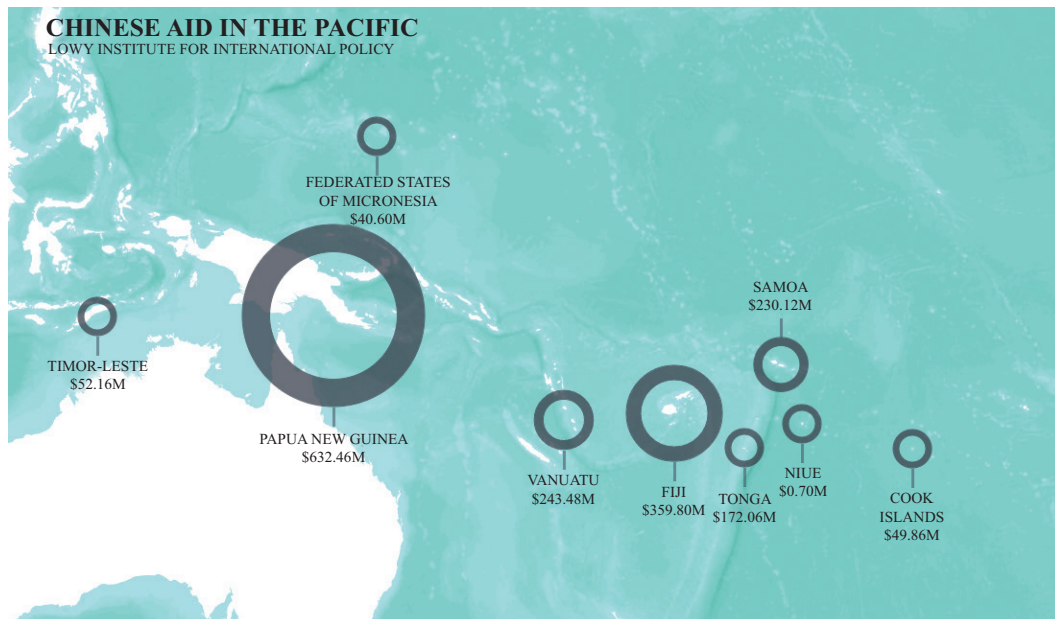


Figure 8. The Levels of Chinese Aid in the Pacific, 2015

Source: “China fills a vacuum in the South Pacific from Fiji to Australia,” *WikiTRIBUNE*, February 8, 2018, <<https://www.wikitribune.com/article/34079/>>.

V. The Indo-Pacific Strategy Regards China as a Competitor

“A New Type of Great Power Relations,” proposed by China, was a diplomatic slogan to frame China-US Relations before President Donald Trump was inaugurated on January 20, 2017. For Chinese, “Zhengming” — using names properly — is a key component of moral cultivation. It is a matter of defining one’s roles and relationships in a society. With a strategic calculation, since the name defines the substance, if the US recognizes China as a big country, then China will be able to climb to prestigious status, sharing power and benefits on an equal footing.

The strategic ways that China runs are, on the one hand, to stay in existing international organizations and exercise its influence and, on the other hand, to promote a new parallel architecture and share power. Naturally, this new order has challenged the US-centered order; Xi’s China dream contradicts Trump’s “make America great again.”

Although President Trump fiercely criticized former President Obama during

election campaigns, he has not discarded Obama's diplomatic legacy after he was inaugurated; the politico-economic structures of the Asia-Pacific region during Obama administration have shown confrontations between China and US as well as its allies in certain areas. Trump even adds to it more active and large-scaled diplomatic efforts, pledging to build a "free and open Indo-Pacific" framework and stressing America's democratic allies in the region, including Australia, India, and Japan, as a balance against China's rise, *i.e.*, China's growing clout in Asia must be managed or even checked.

Trump undisguisedly has delivered to the world his ambition to make America great again. In contrast, Xi pledged to build the strongest and most powerful socialist country in the world in the political report of the 19th Chinese Communist Party Congress. This sends a strong message to the world that China is very ambitious to rise and turn the given international order into a different one framed by a socialist system. It would change the world dominated by the west for almost four to five hundred years if the China dream were to become true. As Dan P. McAdams analyzed, Trump is a tough and strategic pragmatist fighting to win.⁷

By virtue of economic growth and technological enhancement, China has made a huge breakthrough in military power, thus threatening technological competition and security concerns of the US and its allies. October 4, 2018, US Vice-president Mike Pence accused China of "systematic theft" of US weapons systems and the illicit transfer of dual-use technology that has upset the military balance between the US and China; China's "proactive and coercive" ways in meddling in the US mid-term elections are also intolerable.

Besides, Trump understands that Chinese leaders are apt to compromise in dealing with their harder counterparts during political bargaining; he may not stop his fists until China is knocked down the floor.

VI. Concluding Remarks

In a geo-strategic view, Taiwan is located in the vital link of the First Island

7. Dan P. McAdams, "The Mind of Donald Trump," June 2016, *The Atlantic*, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/06/the-mind-of-donald-trump/480771/>>.

Chain, safeguarding the interests of the democratic stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region. As an unsinkable aircraft carrier preventing Socialist China's expansionism, it would bring disastrous consequences to this region if Taiwan became part of Chinese territory. In coping with the expansionism of the Red empire, Taiwan has its advantages not only for its geo-military significance, but also for its democratic way of life. Before a war starts, national strengths of a country can be obtained and sustained if its democratic process of elections can be guaranteed to be without external interference and threats. Clearly, in the context of comprehensive US containment strategy against China, war is unlikely to break out.

In a very isolated situation, China could or would take differing approaches toward the issue of the Taiwan Strait: (1) a rhetorically firm stance on the One-China Principle; (2) a low-profile response toward US provocation; (3) conducting divide-and-rule and carrot-and-stick tactics toward Taiwan society; (4) conducting three wars: legal, media, and psychological wars; (5) messing up Taiwanese society with fake news; (6) dispatching the Fifth Columns penetrating every corner of Taiwan society; (7) inciting internal confrontations in every sphere of life; (8) increasing Taiwan's social and economic dependence on China; (9) alienating Taiwanese from Americans or Japanese; and (10) further suffocating Taiwan's international living space. In a sense, Taiwan's freedom, as strength of a democracy, also exposes itself to China's easy access, free penetration, and incessant destruction of Taiwan's internal harmony and stability.

Under these circumstances, it is the time for like-minded countries to jointly protect their own democratic ways of life, especially preventing China's malicious tactics from undermining their free and open elections and actively exporting their democracies to China to help Chinese out of authoritarianism. Being afraid of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Chinese leaders assert that only the communist one-party rule fits China's special situation. A check-and-balance democracy as a universal value will be the most vulnerable but fragile point of the Chinese government. Accompanied by the rise of democratic and independence movements inside Taiwan and Hong Kong, China has become a common target for the free world as well as Chinese fighters for freedom to hit. The best defense is a good offense. There is no wonder that the socio-cultural foundation for Taiwan-Asian democracies could be more solid; both of them may work out some projects on democracies and human

rights assisting the Chinese people to fight for their own democracy. In the application of American Indo-Pacific Strategy, Taiwan can play a significant and vital role as a loyal and active strategic partner.

