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## **OFFICE**

Institute for National Defense and Security Research

No.172, Bo-Ai Road, Zhongzheng Dist., Taipei City, Taiwan (R.O.C.)

Tel: 886-2-2331-2360 Ext.705 | Fax: 886-2-2331-2361

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China would like to ensure that the Taliban does not support or provide sanctuaries to ETIM as it could create serious security problems for China in Xinjiang. While China has desisted deploying troops in Afghanistan, it has two military bases in Tajikistan, including one near the Wakhan Corridor. The base is supposedly for the purpose of counter-terrorism efforts in the region.

Thus far, Taliban leaders have been receptive and sensitive to China’s interests and concerns. During his July 2021 visit to China, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar stated that his country would “never allow any force to engage in acts detrimental to China”.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Taliban spokesperson, Suhail Shaheen promised that the Taliban would refrain from interference in China’s internal affairs, a clear reference to Xinjiang.<sup>14</sup>

**TALIBAN’S RECEPTIVITY TO CHINA’S ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN**

China has clear economic goals in Afghanistan, both direct and indirect. Afghanistan is a resource-rich landlocked state with resources worth trillions of dollars. It is reputed to be rich in rare earth metals including lanthanum, cerium, neodymium, aluminium, gold, silver, zinc, mercury, lithium, copper, and petroleum.<sup>15</sup> Hence, some have argued that China has clear commercial motivations in cozying up with the Taliban as it gains control of the country following the US withdrawal.<sup>16</sup>

China is also keen to integrate Afghanistan into its globally oriented economic plans under the auspices of the BRI. The Chinese have responded positively as the Taliban has also openly expressed its desire to attract Chinese economic investments. According to a Chinese spokesperson Hua Chunying, the Taliban has “on multiple occasions” expressed the desire that “it looks forward to China’s participation in Afghanistan’s reconstruction and development”.<sup>17</sup> As such, Hua argued that “we are ready to continue to develop good-neighbourliness and friendly cooperation with Afghanistan and play a constructive role in Afghanistan’s peace and reconstruction”.<sup>18</sup>



<sup>13</sup> Henry Storey, “China’s Afghan Conundrum,” *The Interpreter* (Australia), July 30, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> According to Ahmad Shah Katawazai, a former diplomat in Afghan embassy in Washington, Afghanistan has resources to the value of US\$3 trillion. See Tan Weizhen, “China May Align Itself with Taliban and Try to Exploit Afghanistan’s Rare Earth Metals, Analyst Warns,” *CNBC*, August 17, 2021, <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/17/taliban-in-afghanistan-china-may-exploit-rare-earth-metals-analyst-says.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Globally, China dominates the rare earths market with about 35 percent of the world’s reserves being in China. China is believed to have some 44 million metric tons of reserves, compared say to the US which has about 1.4 million tons. As rare earths are used extensively in electronics, satellites and aircraft, China has immense influence in world trade in this area and its access to these metals in Afghanistan will only enhance its power, both economic, military and political. See Weizhen, “China May Align Itself with Taliban.”

<sup>17</sup> Weizhen, “China May Align Itself with Taliban.”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



the American military defeat and withdrawal, China would continue to walk a tightrope in Afghanistan due mainly to the fast evolving and uncertain security situation in the country. For those expecting a *Pax Sinica* in Afghanistan and elsewhere would be disappointed as this is something not in China's interest nor play of its playbook as Beijing understands the Afghan psychology better than any other great powers.

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Bilveer Singh, PhD is the Deputy Head, Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore; Adjunct Senior Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies; and President, Political Science Association, Singapore.

The views expressed are strictly personal and not of any institution, the author may be affiliated with.

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# LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE OPENING OF THE TAIWAN REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE IN LITHUANIA

*Jung-Ming Chang*

## INTRODUCTION

Small states are often underestimated, if not ignored, in world politics. However, this is not always the case such that the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must. A recent case demonstrates this well. Lithuania just opened the Taiwan Representative Office in Vilnius in July 2021.<sup>1</sup> This is the first-ever outpost using the name of “Taiwan” in Europe and deemed by China as a serious challenge to its self-proclaimed ‘one China’ principle. China soon recalled its ambassador to Lithuania, demanded Lithuania reciprocate the move, and put a hold on the rail freight link in August. However, Lithuania’s move was welcomed by the United States. As U.S. Department of State spokesman Ned Price put it, “we do stand in solidarity with our NATO Ally Lithuania.”<sup>2</sup> The Lithuanian case is perhaps just the beginning. As more small states join this campaign and with the help of big countries, they could probably turn the tide in the current world.

## A CHINA-OBSESSED PRINCIPLE

China usually forces other countries to accept its ‘one China’ principle as the foundation for establishing bilateral diplomatic relations. The principle predefined by the Chinese communist government goes like this: there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is



<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Chung, “US Backs Taiwan’s Move to Open De Facto Embassy in Lithuania,” *South China Morning Post*, July 20, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3141815/us-backs-taiwans-move-open-de-facto-embassy-lithuania>.  
<sup>2</sup> Ned Price, “Department Press Briefing – August 10, 2021,” *U.S. Department of State*, August 10, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-august-10-2021/#post-269346-LITHUANIA>.







played her part in demonstrating the will to protect its overseas territory, the French Polynesia, in the Indo-Pacific through the Heifara Exercise in late June this year.<sup>16</sup> In the exercise, a contingent of three Rafale fighter jets along with two A330 tankers and two A400M cargo planes flew from three bases in France to the South Pacific with only one stop in Travis, California. After the exercise, French President Emmanuel Macron urged countries in the South Pacific to establish a coast guard network to crack down on 'predatory' fishing in the region.<sup>17</sup>

However, more could be done by the U.S. side to assist small states when they choose not to follow the 'one China' principle. The Mongolian case in 2016 and Lithuanian incident in 2021 comprise two cases for comparison. Mongolia failed to carry out non-adherence to the 'one China' principle due to the lack of support by major powers, namely the United States. Conversely, Lithuania persisted in letting Taiwan open the Taiwan Representative Office in Vilnius after receiving support from the United States. And it is encouraging to see that U.S. backing of Lithuania does not only happen once but has been conducted in a continuous fashion. When asked by Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda for consistent U.S. support for the policy vis-à-vis China, U.S. President Joe Biden responded that the United States is closely following Lithuania's steps and that the United States supports Lithuania on this path during an informal conversation at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) November 1, 2021, in Glasgow.<sup>18</sup> In order to win the competition with China, the United States should give a hand to small countries when needed.

**AN INCLUSIVE STRATEGY**

The 'one China' principle is gradually not applicable to the current international structure. Not only does the principle prevent countries from pursuing their best interests due to China's economic coercion, the principle also does not contribute to China's long-term development which depends on a freer economy and society. The United States and like-minded countries in the world should let China understand that



<sup>16</sup> "Did French Rafale Fighters Really Fly 17,000km Nonstop in 12 Hours?" *Week*, June 29, 2021, <https://www.theweek.in/news/world/2021/06/29/did-french-rafale-fighters-really-fly-17k-km-nonstop-in-12-hours.html>.  
<sup>17</sup> Michel Rose, "France, South Pacific Nations to Combat 'Predatory' Fishing as China Extends Reach," *Reuters*, July 19, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/france-south-pacific-nations-combat-predatory-fishing-china-extends-reach-2021-07-19/>.  
<sup>18</sup> Mindaugas Laukagalys, "US backs Lithuania's Taiwan policy, Nausėda says after meeting Biden," *Lithuanian National Radio and Television*, November 3, 2021, <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1533421/us-backs-lithuania-s-taiwan-policy-nauseda-says-after-meeting-biden>.

a less restrictive 'one China' principle will be a better option. Currently, the United States still approaches only the major powers in the West. This has been a hard habit to break in international relations. However, it is simply not enough if the ultimate goal is to compete with China. More allies and partners are needed in the international arena as well. Lastly, maybe China could also consider revising its 'one China' principle and allowing countries in the world to recognize China and Taiwan at the same time.

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Jung-Ming Chang is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of National Defense and Security Research. His research interests include U.S.-China-Taiwan relations and Taiwan-Oceania relations.

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able to solve transnational conflicts. IHL also refer to various types of armed conflicts and further afford a glimpse of the legal outlines of the multifaceted concept. Therefore, further research is needed to express the multifaceted concepts in concrete terms.

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Letsiwe Portia Rodah Magongo is an Attorney at the Kingdom of Eswatini. Masters of Law in Strategic Studies and International Affairs from the Graduate Institute of Strategic Studies, War College, ROC (Taiwan) National Defence University.

Ruei-Lin Yu, Associate Professor of Graduate Institute of Strategic Studies, National Defence University, ROC (Taiwan). PhD of Graduate Institute of National Development, National Taiwan University. Study Field: International Relations Theory, International Law and Politics of the Sea, Area Security.

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William Chih-Tung Chung is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of National Defense and Security Research. He is also an Assistant Professor at the National Defence University, Taiwan and an Associated Senior Research Fellow at ISDP, Sweden. He holds a Ph.D. from the Department of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

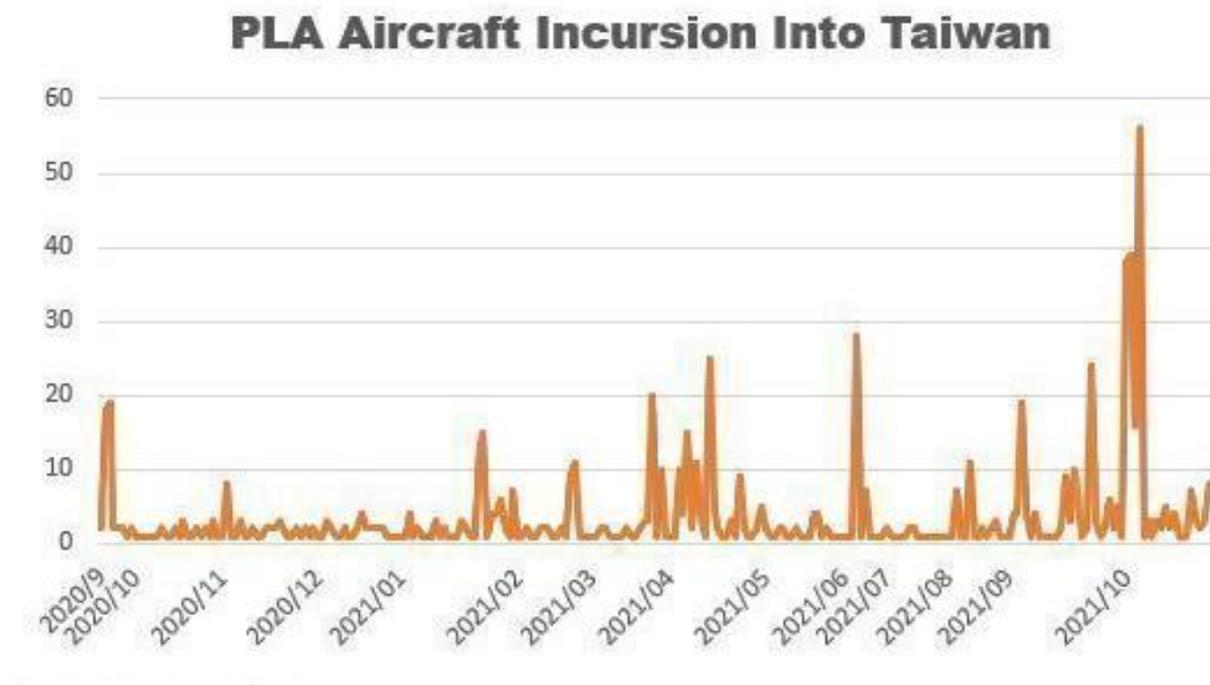
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# UNCOVERING PLA'S SHARP INCURSION INTO TAIWAN AIRSPACE

*Tsung-Han Wu & Hsiao-Huang Shu*

An unprecedented number of 150 sorties of PLA's military aircraft breaching Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) between October 1 and October 5 drew a great attention of international society. Even though the PLA began their frequent presence and harassment of the island since 2016 when President Tsai won the election, released data from the Ministry of Defense of Taiwan starting from September 2020 demonstrates a significant rise in the trend. (See Figure 1)

**FIGURE 1:** A Run Chart of PLA Aircraft Incursion into Taiwan since September 2020



Source: MoD, Taiwan

From January to October this year, 2021, moreover, the total sorties have been more than 600, in which one fourth sorties took place in the first five days of October. In the meantime, six national navies, including the US, the UK, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, and Netherlands were involved in a joint exercise in the Western Pacific, and followed by the US, the UK, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia navies reportedly convergence in the Southeast China for another two-week exercise. Putting these military exercise activities near Taiwan together, tensions erupted and escalated by the warplanes and warships shadowed the Indo-Pacific region. (See Table 1)

**TABLE 1: PLA Incursion into TW Airspace and Big Event (Oct.1-5)**

Date	PLA Military Aircraft Number	Incidents	
10/1	J-16 (fighter)	*28	PRC National Day
	SU-30 (fighter)	*4	
	H-6 (bomber)	*4	
	Y-8 ASW (transport aircraft)	*1	
	KJ-500 (early warning aircraft)	*1	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>*38</b>	
10/2	J-16 (fighter)	*26	US, UK, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, and Netherlands joint exercise in the Western Pacific
	SU-30 (fighter)	*10	
	Y-8 ASW (transport aircraft)	*2	
	KJ-500 (early warning aircraft)	*1	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>*39</b>	
10/3	J-16 (fighter)	*38	
	SU-30 (fighter)	*2	
	Y-8 ASW (transport aircraft)	*2	
	H-6 (bomber)	*12	
	KJ-500 (early warning aircraft)	*2	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>*16</b>	
10/4	J-16 (fighter)	*38	Joint exercise held by US, UK, Japan, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia in the South China Sea
	SU-30 (fighter)	*2	
	Y-8 ASW (transport aircraft)	*2	
	H-6 (bomber)	*12	
	KJ-500 (early warning aircraft)	*2	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>*56</b>	
10/5	Y-8 ASW (transport aircraft)	*1	
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>*1</b>	

Source: MoD, Taiwan













## **SUBMISSION**

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