

# Chapter 11

## Regional Security Developments in the Taiwan Strait

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### I. Introduction

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China’s authoritarian and dictatorial leftist ideology is becoming more and more apparent, coupled with the external expansionism under the manipulation of national consciousness, which has made the international community more alert to the threat of China, while the recognition and sympathy for a free and democratic Taiwan are increasing. Cross-strait relations continue to be tense and confrontational due to the polarized perceptions of state sovereignty between the two governments. Beijing is actively using the “gray zone conflict” to exert pressure on Taiwan, and Chinese military aircraft and warships are harassing Taiwan in numerous ways and with record frequency. In the face of China’s increasingly assertive stance and the threat of force, Taiwan continues to maintain its “status quo” cross-strait policy on the one hand and actively demonstrates its determination to defend itself as a pivotal deterrent to China’s advances on the other. To this end, this chapter intends to analyze the critical developments of Taiwan’s regional security in 2021 in terms of Taiwan’s mindset of seeking stability under the cross-strait impasse, Taiwan’s response under the new Biden administration, and the rising internationalization of Taiwan Strait issues.

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## II. Taiwan's Approach to Stability under the Cross-Strait Impasse

### 1. The Wisdom of “Not Giving in When Under Pressure and Not Taking Any Risks When Receiving Support”

Since taking office in 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen has proposed a consistent and stable cross-strait policy of “maintaining the status quo. In her New Year’s address in 2021, President Tsai emphasized the importance of stability in the Taiwan Strait, saying, “From the perspective of global strategy, Taiwan’s position is becoming increasingly important. The stability of cross-strait relations is now not only an issue of concern for the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, but also an issue of concern for the stability of the Indo-Pacific region, and it is already a global focus.” As long as Beijing is willing to resolve confrontations and improve cross-strait relations, we are willing to work together to facilitate meaningful dialogue in accordance with the principle of reciprocity and dignity.”<sup>1</sup> This echoes President Tsai’s call in his 2020 presidential inaugural address to implement the overall national strategic goal of “maintaining the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait” through the four principles of “peace, reciprocity, democracy, and dialogue.”

China has continued to harass and provoke Taiwan with its military aircraft and warships in the air and sea space surrounding Taiwan in 2021. Such harassment has become a political tool for Beijing to express its dissatisfaction with Taiwan and the international community’s involvement in Taiwan Strait issues. In this regard, President Tsai Ing-wen said in a senior national security meeting that civil and military threats against Taiwan would not help cross-strait relations and would not be conducive to the status quo of peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, and that cross-strait peace is not a unilateral matter for Taiwan, and that the key is now in the hands of China. She also took this opportunity to point out that in cross-strait relations, “Taiwan’s consistent position is not to yield when under pressure

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<sup>1</sup> “Full Text of President Tsai’s 2021 New Year’s Speech,” *Central News Agency*, January 1, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/GmMvMD>.

and not to take any risks when receiving support”.<sup>2</sup> This “non-submission” and “non-adventurous” stance reflects President Tsai Ing-wen’s low-profile, pragmatic mindset of “maintaining the status quo” and avoiding active conflict with China in the face of Beijing’s threats and intimidation. Internally, it echoes the mainstream social consensus of maintaining the cross-strait status quo, and externally, it responds to the international community’s demand for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

## 2. Continued Tensions Across the Taiwan Strait Under Sovereignty Disputes

In response to President Tsai Ing-wen’s “principled and non-aggressive” policy to maintain the cross-strait status quo, the Mainland’s Taiwan Affairs Office severely criticized this as revealing “the nature of the DPP authorities to seek Taiwan’s independence” and described Taiwan’s statement that it “expects the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to gradually resume normal and orderly exchanges to increase understanding and reduce misunderstanding” as a “deceptive trick.” The government does not recognize the “1992 Consensus,” a one-China principle, and has been colluding with external forces to provoke “independence.”<sup>3</sup> In her written speech at the “2021 Taiwan National Conference—Normalizing Taiwan and Sustaining Peace in the Asia-Pacific Region,” President Tsai Ing-wen said that the government’s consistent position on safeguarding Taiwan’s sovereignty is “sovereignty over Taiwan, no concessions; democracy and freedom, no retreat.” Vice President Lai Ching-teh said in his speech that Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country and that it is an indisputable fact that Taiwan and China are not subordinate to each other and that only Taiwanese people have the right to decide the future of Taiwan.<sup>4</sup> In response, the Taiwan Affairs Office said, “The DPP authorities have manipulated and publicized the issue of seeking

<sup>2</sup> “President Holds High-level National Security Meeting, Reaffirms that the Key to Cross-strait Peace Lies in China,” *Central News Agency*, February 9 2021, <https://reurl.cc/VEyoa6>.

<sup>3</sup> “Beijing Criticizes Tsai Ing-wen’s New Year’s Speech to Reveal Taiwan’s Independence,” *Radio France Internationale*, January 2, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/W3jgxD>.

<sup>4</sup> “Taiwan at Home and Abroad is Meeting Today, Tsai Ing-wen: Territorial Sovereignty will not Yield an Inch,” *Liberty Times*, April 25, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/mLeQD1>; “President: Only Taiwanese Have the Right to the Future of Taiwan Decision,” *Central Radio*, April 25, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/ZGYoeW>.

‘independence,’ and have been spreading the rhetoric of ‘Taiwan independence,’ further exposing their hypocritical goodwill and the true nature of ‘Taiwan independence,’ and tearing down their so-called ‘easing cross-strait relations’.”<sup>5</sup> Obviously, the governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have polarized perceptions of state sovereignty, making cross-strait relations continue to be tense and confrontational.

2021 marks the centenary of the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC). In a nationalistic atmosphere, Xi Jinping declared that the Chinese nation has “stood up, grown rich and grown strong” under the theme of “realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” “Anyone who tries to do so will be bloodied in front of the Great Wall of Steel built with flesh and blood of more than 1.4 billion Chinese people.” The company’s primary goal is to “provide the best possible solution to the problem of Taiwan and to realize the complete unification of the motherland. ... is determined to crush any attempt of ‘Taiwan independence’ and create a better future for national rejuvenation. However, no one should underestimate the strong determination, firm will and powerful ability of the Chinese people to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country.”<sup>6</sup> A statistical analysis of Xi’s 165 speeches shows that although the number of times he talks about Taiwan has decreased, he talks less and less about “peaceful development” and more and more about “crushing Taiwan’s independence.” The proportion of usage of threatening terms towards Taiwan has increased significantly.<sup>7</sup> This also indicates that Beijing’s posture toward Taiwan is becoming more and more assertive.

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<sup>5</sup> “Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council: DPP Authorities Tore off the Mask of So-called ‘Ease of Cross-strait Relations’,” *Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council*, Taiwan Affairs Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, April 26, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/Q90gG5>.

<sup>6</sup> “Xi Jinping: Speech at the Celebration of the Centennial of the Communist Party of China,” *Xinhua Net*, July 1, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/839mqd>.

<sup>7</sup> “Peaceful Development” Fewer and Less, ‘Smashing Taiwan Independence’ More and More: Full Analysis of Xi Jinping’s 165 Speeches,” *Central News Agency*, July 1, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/IR3OzY>.

### 3. Taiwan Shows its Determination to Defend Itself Against China's Extreme Pressure

In addition to the naked threat of “armed reunification,” Beijing’s primary mode has been through the so-called gray zone conflict in recent years. Its thinking and approach are to regard conflict as a necessary means to achieve specific political goals, attempting to exert pressure and make a statement on preset targets through a combination of “hard power,” “soft power,” and “sharp power” without triggering war. The recent harassment of Taiwan by Beijing’s military aircraft and warships is a case in point. In the first few days of President Joseph Biden’s presidency, Chinese warplanes harassed Taiwan’s surrounding airspace on a massive scale. On April 12, a record number of 25 aircraft harassed Taiwan’s southwest Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), the tenth consecutive day of harassment since April 3.<sup>8</sup> In the face of China’s aggressive approach, the Chinese government has been able to use its “sharp power” to exert pressure and make a stand against pre-determined targets. In the face of China’s aggressive military threats, John Aquilino, the new commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, warned that Beijing’s annexation of Taiwan is a top priority and that the threat of Chinese annexation of Taiwan by force is “closer than imagined.”<sup>9</sup>

In 2020, there were 380 military aircraft intruding into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone for harassment, but as of September 26, 2021, the number of Chinese military sorties has exceeded an unprecedented 500. However, China’s provocative pressure on Taiwan continues to rise, with Beijing sending an unprecedented 38, 39, 16, 56, and 1 military aircraft to disturb Taiwan for five consecutive days since October 1, the National Day, setting a new record for

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<sup>8</sup> “The Number of 25 Aircrafts Harassing Taiwan’s Southwest Air Defense Identification Zone Hits a New High,” *Central News Agency*, April 21, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/W3pob7>.

<sup>9</sup> “U.S. Indo-Pacific Commander-in-Chief: China’s Threat of Invading Taiwan Is Urgent, It Should Be Deterred Quickly,” *Central News Agency*, March 24 2021, <https://reurl.cc/bX1oyr>.

a single day of disturbance.<sup>10</sup> In response, the U.S. State Department issued a statement condemning China's "provocative actions" that undermined regional stability. On October 4, the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force issued a press release confirming that the naval forces of the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Netherlands, Canada, and New Zealand held joint military exercises in the waters southwest of Okinawa from October 2 to 3, intending to strengthen cooperation among allies and "realize a free and open Indo-Pacific region."<sup>11</sup> Xi Jinping took the opportunity to speak in a high profile about cross-strait unification at a conference commemorating the anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution on October 9, saying, "Realizing the unification of the motherland by peaceful means is most consistent with the interests of all compatriots, including those in Taiwan. He warned sternly that 'Taiwan independence' is the biggest obstacle to the unification of the motherland and a serious threat to national revitalization. Those who forget their motherland, betray the motherland, and split the country will never have a good end and will be spurned by the people and judged by history! The Taiwan issue is purely a domestic affair of China. No foreign interference is allowed."<sup>12</sup> In response, President Tsai Ing-wen made four insistencies in her National Day speech on October 10: "Insist on a free and democratic constitutional system, insist on the non-subordination of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China, insist on the inviolability of sovereignty and annexation, and insist that the future of the Republic of China in Taiwan must follow the will of all Taiwanese people."<sup>13</sup> To unite the country and

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<sup>10</sup> "Over 500 Sorties Entered Airspace This Year, More than Last Year's Total," *Liberty Times*, September 26, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/MkNXoL>; "28 Airplanes Interfere with Taiwan and the U.S. Department of Defense: Destabilize and Increase Risk of Misjudgment," *China Central News Agency*, June 16, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/R0ao36>; Hong Zhezhen, "A Total of 38 Planes in One Day Disturbed Our Air Defense Attack Formation and Arrived off the East Coast of Our Country," *UDN*, October 2, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/GbXrdZ>; "The Air Situation in Our Southwest Airspace," *Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of China*, October 4, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/Kr37kM>.

<sup>11</sup> "Over 100 PLA Planes Interfere with Taiwan and Step on the Red Line. Japan and the United States Confirm the Six-nation Military Exercise at Sea," *Up Media*, October 4, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/GbK8my>.

<sup>12</sup> "Xi Jinping: Speech at the Commemoration of the 110th Anniversary of the 1911 Revolution," *China Communist Party News Network*, October 9, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/0xZApY>.

<sup>13</sup> "Consensus, Divergence, Unity and Observance of Taiwan: President Delivers National Day Speech," *Presidential Office of the Republic of China*, October 10, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/2oE1Ea>.

respond to Xi Jinping's intimidation of Taiwan.

As China's threat of force grows more reckless, President Tsai Ing-wen made it clear that Taiwan's determination to defend itself is the key to deterring China's advances. President Tsai emphasized that instead of considering whether foreigners should support us or whether China will take any action against us, "the real key lies in ourselves," that is, "whether we have the determination to defend ourselves and whether we are firm on the values of freedom and democracy," in order to make the international community feel that Taiwan is worthy of support.<sup>14</sup> This reflects President Tsai's national defense mindset of "strength is security". "Under the national defense mindset of President Tsai, the emphasis is on self-help and then help from others, and under the military strategy of "defense and defense, heavy deterrence," she is committed to building a national defense force that is both defensive and deterrent.

### III. Taiwan's Response under the Biden Administration

#### 1. Washington Continues to Deepen Taiwan-U.S. Relations Under the "Anti-China and Taiwan-friendly" Line of Approach

With "America's Place in the World," President Biden delivered his first foreign policy address at the State Department on February 4, 2021. In his first foreign policy address since taking office, he declared that "America is Back, Diplomacy is Back" (America is Back, Diplomacy is Back), emphasizing his strategic vision that "we will rebuild alliances, re-engage with the world, address the enormous challenges of the epidemic and global warming, and once again defend democracy and human rights around the world," while positioning China as "our most serious competitor."<sup>15</sup> In his March 3 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, Biden criticized China for seeking unfair advantages, engaging in aggressive

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<sup>14</sup> "President Tsai: Whether Taiwanese are Determined to Defend Themselves is the Key to Deter the CCP's Rash Advance," *Central Radio*, May 5, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/O0xoZD>.

<sup>15</sup> "Remarks by President Biden on America's Place in the World," *The White House*, February 4, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/YOZ6nX>.

and coercive behavior, and undermining the core rules and values of an open and stable international system, while making clear his support for Taiwan, a leading democracy and a critical economic and security partner, in line with long-standing U.S. commitments.<sup>16</sup> Biden's negative characterization of China and positive support for Taiwan largely continue the previous Trump administration's primary "anti-China and Taiwan-friendly" line. Biden's negative characterization of China and his positive support for Taiwan largely continue the "anti-China and Taiwan-friendly" primary line of the previous Trump administration.

President Tsai Ing-wen believes that Taiwan-U.S. relations remain stable under the Biden administration and that existing bilateral cooperation and exchanges have continued without being affected by the change of regime in the United States. Furthermore, President Tsai said she noted that U.S. warships have repeatedly carried out freedom of navigation missions, demonstrating the apparent attitude of the United States toward challenges to the security status quo in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to maintaining optimal bilateral communication between Taiwan and the United States, Taiwan must also continue to deepen its overall cooperation with the United States, especially in terms of strategic economic and trade dialogue.<sup>17</sup> On April 9, the Biden Administration announced the latest Guidelines for Relations with Taiwan, which aim to improve the various restrictions on Taiwan-U.S. exchanges in the past and promote more official interaction between Taiwan and the United States.<sup>18</sup> In response to Taiwan's continued efforts to strengthen the bilateral security partnership between Taiwan and the United States, the Biden Administration has proposed additional guidelines to facilitate the bilateral security partnership between Taiwan and the United States. In response to Taiwan's continued strengthening of its bilateral security partnership with the U.S., Beijing has positioned it as a so-called "reliance on the U.S. for independence" and criticized the U.S. for maliciously exaggerating the China threat

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<sup>16</sup> "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance," *The White House*, March 2021, <https://reurl.cc/noW0MI>.

<sup>17</sup> "President Holds High-level National Security Meeting, Reaffirms that the Key to Cross-strait Peace Lies in China," *Central News Agency*, February 9, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/VEyoa6>.

<sup>18</sup> Jiang Jinye, "U.S.-Taiwan Engagement Guidelines: U.S. Officials Visit Representative Office and Shuang Oak Park," *Central News Agency*, April 10, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/NZYmjQ>.



theory and continuing to send the wrong signal to the “Taiwan independence” forces.

## 2. Taipei Responded to the U.S.’s Balanced Cross-strait Policy by “Maintaining the Status Quo”

Foreign Secretary Joseph Wu said on April 7 that the United States had “clearly seen the danger of a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan” and that if a Chinese attack on Taiwan occurred, Taiwan would fight to the end to demonstrate Taiwan’s determination to defend itself.<sup>19</sup> The U.S. State Department subsequently emphasized that its commitment to Taiwan was “rock-solid” and was highly concerned about China’s continued coercive behavior toward Taiwan.<sup>20</sup> This has also raised concerns about whether the U.S. security commitment to Taiwan has changed from “strategic ambiguity” to “strategic clarity”. In response, Kurt Campbell, White House chief of Indo-Pacific affairs, said on July 6 how the U.S. could appropriately show respect and support for Taiwan while maintaining its long-standing “one-China policy,” stating that “there is a very delicate ‘dangerous balance’ between the two, but it is a balance that must be maintained. The United States has a vital interest in maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and other countries recognize that this is also relevant to international stability.”<sup>21</sup>

Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that the Biden administration does not want conflict with China and intends to start a new Cold War to contain China, but that Washington insists on maintaining a “rules-based international order” to compete with China.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the Biden administration, in an effort to maintain a “delicate and dangerous balance” in Taiwan Strait security, has reminded Taiwan that North America “does not support Taiwan independence” while warning

<sup>19</sup> “Taiwan Says It will Fight to the End if China Invades Taiwan,” *Voice of America Chinese*, April 7, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/ZGYdrg>.

<sup>20</sup> “China’s Warships Disrupt Taiwan, US Reiterates Commitment to Taiwan,” *Central Radio*, April 8, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/3adA3X>.

<sup>21</sup> “Kurt Campbell: U.S. and China Can Co-Exist Peacefully,” *The Asia Society*, July 6, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/KAe8Le>.

<sup>22</sup> David Shepardson, “Blinken Says China Acting ‘More Aggressively Abroad’ - ‘60 Minutes’ Interview,” *Reuters*, May 4, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/WE28jx>.

Beijing of the “catastrophic” nature of Taiwan’s crimes and opposed any unilateral change in the U.S. perception of the Taiwan Strait by either side. President Tsai Ing-wen’s policy of maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan Strait by emphasizing “no provocation, no submission, and no surprises” is clearly in line with the U.S. cross-strait policy. In contrast, Beijing’s nationalistic and overconfident attempts to unilaterally change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait are tantamount to challenging the bottom line of the U.S. “rule-based international order”. As a result, the U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s security is becoming more transparent as China’s threats against Taiwan increase.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that President Biden said on October 5 that he had a telephone conversation with Xi Jinping about Taiwan and that both sides agreed to abide by the Taiwan agreement.<sup>23</sup> Since the so-called Taiwan agreement is the first new U.S.-China agreement of its kind, it will have a profound impact on trilateral relations between the United States, China, and Taiwan, so what exactly is it? Is it just the U.S. “one-China policy,” as the Washington government claims? All of this needs to be further clarified.

### **3. Taiwan Becomes the Unexpected Recipient of the U.S. Withdrawal From Afghanistan**

The U.S.-led 20-year-long “War on Terror” in Afghanistan has seen an avalanche of defeat for the Afghan government forces with the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and the Taliban (Taliban, meaning Bachelor of God) took full control of Afghanistan after the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops on August 31, bringing an end to the U.S. war in Afghanistan. The chaos and humanitarian crisis caused by the hasty withdrawal of U.S. and allied forces, the deadliest suicide terror attack at Kabul Airport since 2011, and the power vacuum left in Afghanistan for rival Russia to take advantage of are all ironies to President Biden’s claim that “America is back”. Moreover, the disastrous withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan has exacerbated the negative international image of the United States, forcing U.S.

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<sup>23</sup> “What is the ‘Taiwan Agreement’? U.S. State Department: The U.S. ‘One China Policy’,” *Liberty Times*, October 8, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/V54AxR>.

allies to re-examine Washington's commitment to its security and dealing a severe blow to Biden's attempts to rebuild America's credibility as a global leader.

In the context of the U.S.-China rivalry, China has not surprisingly taken advantage of the U.S. defeat in Afghanistan to manipulate the "U.S.-scepticism theory" to undermine U.S. credibility in maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, which has also raised questions about U.S. security commitments to Taiwan. At a White House press conference on August 17, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan rejected the analogy between Afghanistan and Taiwan, saying that the two situations were very different, emphasizing that the U.S. commitment to its allies and partners has always been "sacrosanct" and that "we also believe our commitment to Taiwan and Israel is as strong as ever."<sup>24</sup> Then, in a surprise move, Biden made his first reference to the North Atlantic Treaty on Taiwan on August 19: "We have made a sacrosanct commitment to Article 5, that if there is an actual invasion or action against our NATO allies, we will respond. So did Japan, so did Korea, so did Taiwan."<sup>25</sup> U.S. polls show that more than half of Americans favor sending troops to defend Taiwan if China invades, and Biden justified ending the war in Afghanistan by focusing on new competitive threats such as China.<sup>26</sup> On the October 21 CNN News program, Biden was asked, "If China attacks Taiwan, will the United States defend Taiwan? He replied unequivocally, "Yes, we commit to doing that."<sup>27</sup> Although interpretations of Biden's and Sullivan's statements on Taiwan's security differ, it is clear that the Biden administration, in an effort to repair the damage to its international credibility caused by the war in Afghanistan, has taken an unprecedentedly clear stance on Taiwan's security in the Taiwan Strait, demonstrating a commitment to

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<sup>24</sup> "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Jen Psaki and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan," *The White House*, August 17, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/3avxg8>.

<sup>25</sup> "Full Transcript of ABC News' George Stephanopoulos' Interview with President Joe Biden," *ABC News*, August 19, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/ZGpyW3>.

<sup>26</sup> "Averse to China's Threat, More than Half of Americans Support Sending Troops to Defend Taiwan," *Voice of America Chinese*, August 27, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/ZGR7MW>; "Dennis Strongly Defends Ending 20 Years of U.S. War in Afghanistan," *VOA Chinese*, September 1, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/eEjg8j>.

<sup>27</sup> "Make it Clear! Biden: America Will Defend Taiwan 'We Promised It'," *Liberty Times*, October 22, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/82DR7o>.

ensure that the U.S. will not be deterred from attacking Taiwan. This also makes Taiwan an unexpected beneficiary of the Biden administration's intense diplomacy to rebuild international credibility after the war in Afghanistan.

## IV. The Internationalization of Taiwan Strait Issues

### 1. For the First Time, the G7 Summit Included Taiwan Strait Security in Its Statement

In 2021, the international community's concern for security in the Taiwan Strait had made a breakthrough in response to concerns about the substantial rise of communist China and unhealthy competition between the United States and China. After reaffirming the importance of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific region, the Communiqué included for the first time the Taiwan Strait issue, which is considered taboo by China, emphasizing the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and encouraging the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues; it also expressed grave concern about the situation in the East and South China Seas and strongly opposed any unilateral attempts to change the regional status quo and increase regional tensions.<sup>28</sup> This also put the Taiwan Strait internationalization issue on the global stage. In the subsequent Brussels Summit Communiqué, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) characterized China's "overt ambitions and overconfident behavior as a systemic challenge to the rules-based international order and alliance security-related areas." It will strengthen political dialogue and practical cooperation with its traditional partners in the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea) to promote mutual cooperative security and support for a rules-based international order.<sup>29</sup>

The Biden administration's diplomacy-centered global strategic layout attempts to link Europe and the Indo-Pacific's two strategic blocks and actively introduces the Indo-Pacific security issues, including the Taiwan Strait, to its European allies.

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<sup>28</sup> "Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué," *The White House*, June 13, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/XWvx73>.

<sup>29</sup> "Brussels Summit Communiqué," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, June 14, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/4a2D63>.

In this regard, European countries have also taken concrete actions to demonstrate their concern for the Indo-Pacific and Taiwan. In July, the British HMS Queen Elizabeth strike group sailed into the Indo-Pacific South China Sea, including a U.S. Navy destroyer and a Dutch frigate, and conducted joint military exercises with U.S. and Japanese allies. The British Chief of Naval Staff Tony Radakin said that the Taiwan Strait is clearly “part of the free and open Indo-Pacific.” Then the UK sent the HMS Richmond, one of the ships in the strike group, through the Taiwan Strait on September 27, the first time since the UK left the EU, which can be seen as a statement of its action to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait as the core of the newly established “Australia-UK-U.S. Security Partnership” (AUKUS) on September 15.<sup>30</sup> Germany sent the cruiser Bayern to the Indo-Pacific region in August, which will be the first visit of German warships to the Western Pacific since 2002.<sup>31</sup> The first joint statement of the 2+2 Ministerial Consultation between France and Australia on August 31 made special mention of Taiwan, not only emphasizing the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. The first joint statement of the French-Australian “2+2 Ministerial Consultation” on August 31 made special mention of Taiwan, emphasizing the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and expressing explicit support for Taiwan’s participation in international organizations.<sup>32</sup> The European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee overwhelmingly adopted the draft report on “EU-Taiwan Relations and Cooperation” on September 1, despite strong opposition from China. On September 1, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament overwhelmingly adopted the draft report on EU-Taiwan

<sup>30</sup> “British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth sails into Asia to cross South China Sea,” *BBC Chinese*, July 27, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/qgMbKy>; “British Frigate Passes Taiwan Strait Aircraft Carrier Strike Group Deepens Indo-Pacific,” *Central News Agency*, September 27, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/2oZA8r>; “Rare! British Warship Crossing the Taiwan Strait,” *Voice of America Cantonese*, September 27, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/OkAaMX>; Zhong Zhidong, “The Implications of the Establishment of the Australia-UK-US Tripartite Security Partnership (AUKUS),” *Defense and Security Bi-Weekly Report*, Issue 38, October 1, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/KrbzEm>.

<sup>31</sup> “German Ship Departs for Asia German Defense Minister: Ensuring Unrestricted Maritime Navigation,” *Central News Agency*, August 2, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/MANmWp>.

<sup>32</sup> “The Establishment of the 2+2 Structure of the French and Australian Heads of State, the Statement Mentions Support for Taiwan and Participation in the International Community,” *Central News Agency*, August 31, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/ogObpj>.

Relations and Cooperation and, following Lithuania, proposed to rename the “European Economic and Trade Office” as the “EU Office in Taiwan.”<sup>33</sup> On September 16, the EU adopted the Joint Communication on the EU Strategy for cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region (JCOMM), calling Taiwan a “partner” and stating that it will strengthen cooperation with Taiwan in five areas, including geopolitical tensions, strengthening the resilience of the semiconductor supply chain, deepening trade and investment relations, maritime governance, and promoting data security protection systems, and emphasizing that it will enhance strategic exchanges with the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>34</sup> As European countries expand their strategic vision to the Indo-Pacific region, peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait are limited to cross-strait relations and will gradually become an emerging focus in the international arena.

## 2. Key Neighboring Country Japan Raises Its Voice on Taiwan Strait Security

China’s aggressive external expansionism has led to rising tensions between China and Japan, and in terms of East Asia’s geostrategy, there is a chilling security relationship between Taiwan and its immediate neighbor Japan. Japan’s Deputy Defense Minister Nakayama Yasuhide pointed out that Japan and Taiwan are geographically close to each other and Taiwan is “not a friend, but a brother, a family member, and a much closer relationship. If something happens to Taiwan, it will directly affect Okinawa Prefecture in Japan,” and emphasized that Taiwan is a “red line” and that democratic countries must protect each other.<sup>35</sup> In a speech in Tokyo on July 6, 2021, Japanese Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Taro Aso said that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan could be considered an “existential crisis” as defined in the Security Protection Act (hereinafter referred to as the “Security Act”). Japan would be able to exercise its right to collective

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<sup>33</sup> “Taiwan-EU-China Relations Turbulent: October Plenary Session of the European Parliament May Trigger a Lithuanian Model Domino Effect,” *BBC Chinese*, September 3, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/vg3mgo>.

<sup>34</sup> Lu Yixuan, “The EU-Indo-Pacific Strategy Communiqué Mentions Taiwan as a ‘Partner’ Five Times,” *Liberty Times*, September 17, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/KrxzNR>.

<sup>35</sup> “China’s Threat Increases, Japan’s Deputy Defense Minister: Taiwan is a Brother and Family Must Protect,” *Central News Agency*, June 29, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/pgQbVe>.

self-defense on a limited basis because “when something happens to Taiwan, it is entirely possible that Japan could be put in an existential crisis, and the United States and Japan must work together to defend Taiwan.”<sup>36</sup> The public statements by critical Japanese officials on Taiwan reflect the first joint U.S.-Japan position on “the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait” since the Japan-U.S. 2+2 meeting in March 2021. Reflecting the U.S.-Japan joint position on “the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait” for the first time since the Japan-U.S. 2+2 meeting in March 2021, and the subsequent statement at the U.S.-Japan summit emphasizing “the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.”<sup>37</sup> In addition to supporting Taiwan’s accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), the newly elected Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, has also expressed his support for Taiwan’s accession to the CPTPP and making dealing with China a top priority for his government, he believes that Taiwan is at the forefront of the fight against authoritarianism and that Japan should actively work with the United States to update and prepare for the Taiwan Strait conflict in a precautionary manner.<sup>38</sup>

Japan’s high-profile attention to the importance of security in the Taiwan Strait is based on three key factors: Japan’s perception of the Chinese threat, its response to U.S.-China competitive tensions, and its reassessment of Taiwan’s geostrategic value. Japan should already be aware that under China’s expanding nationalism when Taiwan is not protected, the Diaoyutai Islands will be even more precarious, and China may even challenge Japan’s sovereignty over the Ryukyu Islands, not to mention that after China’s annexation of Taiwan, entire East Asia and even the Indo-Pacific geostrategy will have a radical negative impact on Japan. As China’s ambition to annex Taiwan rises and the U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s security becomes more apparent, Taiwan has become a litmus test for the U.S.-Japan

<sup>36</sup> “Deputy Minister of Japan: If China Invades Taiwan, the US and Japan Should Defend Taiwan Together,” *Central News Agency*, July 5, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/2r5AyX>.

<sup>37</sup> “The US-Japan 2+2 Meeting Approved: The Taiwan Strait Must Be Stable,” *Liberty Times*, March 17, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/vq9b21>; “The Similarities and Differences of the Taiwan Joint Statement are Mentioned Again Later,” *BBC Chinese*, April 18, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/MANmom>.

<sup>38</sup> “The Next Prime Minister will Do His Job! Fumio Kishida Supports Taiwan and does Not Evade,” *Central Radio*, September 29, 2021, <https://reurl.cc/oxQe3v>.

security alliance, and it will be difficult for Japan to stay out of it. Since the U.S. is unwilling to assume responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait alone, and Japan does not have the ability or willingness to face the Chinese challenge alone, Tokyo is actively strengthening the U.S.-Japan security alliance on the one hand and working together to address the Chinese security threat in the Taiwan Strait through security cooperation mechanisms with its partners in the Indo-Pacific region and Europe on the other.

## V. Conclusion

Despite Beijing's strong opposition and suppression, the Taiwan issue is no longer confined to the cross-strait region, and Taiwan Strait security is a crucial area of the Indo-Pacific order. It is gradually becoming an emerging focus of global security. In addition to reflecting the importance of Taiwan's geostrategic location and the consistency of Taiwan's liberal democratic ideals and universal international values, Taiwan's pivotal role in the global industrial supply chain has also allowed Taiwan to strengthen its ties and cooperation with the international community through its economic and trade strategies. All of this, combined with the awakening to the threat of China, has forced the international community to re-examine the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and has created a favorable strategic environment for the internationalization of the Taiwan Strait. In short, China, as the troublemaker of regional security, is the most critical driver of the internationalization of the Taiwan Strait issue. At the same time, Taiwan, which is being coerced and oppressed under Chinese expansionism, only precisely grasps the timing and pushes the boat forward in response to the situation, and appeals to the international community in a "fierce and aggressive" manner.

After the Biden administration took office, it continued its "anti-China and Taiwan-friendly" course. The chaotic end of the failed war in Afghanistan made Biden even more eager to rebuild America's international credibility. Therefore, deterring and countering possible Chinese military adventures in the Taiwan



Strait has become an essential part of the Biden administration's efforts to rebuild America's international credibility after the war in Afghanistan. President Tsai Ing-wen's wisdom in maintaining the status quo on both sides of the Taiwan Strait by "not giving in to pressure and not taking any risks when receiving support" has also helped Taiwan avoid international isolation. Taiwan is China's counterweight, but it is also China's soft underbelly, giving the international community an additional strategic option when countering China. As Taiwan is at the forefront of the fight against Chinese expansionism, the international community should reassess Taiwan's strategic value and essential role instead of negatively viewing Taiwan's impact on the regional security order.

