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Taiwanese Support for National Defense: Insights from Public Opinion Surveys

Kuan-Chen Lee

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the United States has grown more apprehensive regarding the potential of a People's Republic of China (PRC) invasion of Taiwan. The widening cross-strait capability gap, stemming from substantial investments in the People's Liberation Army (PLA), has given rise to growing concern. Consequently, there is a growing call for Taiwan to increase its defense budget, invest in asymmetric capabilities, upgrade tactical strategies, and demonstrate strong determination for self-defense.¹

In the past few years, the Tsai Ing-wen administration has been focused on strengthening Taiwan's defense, including gradually increasing the defense budget, promoting independent defense, improving the reserve system, and extending compulsory military service to one year. While these policy changes signify Taiwan's commitment to enhancing its defense capabilities, few studies explore Taiwanese attitudes toward national defense from a public opinion perspective. In democracies with regular elections, political leaders are ultimately accountable to voters and thus public views on security and defense may constrain the options of decision-makers and prompt certain courses of action.² Therefore, this article seeks to employ a series of surveys commissioned by INDSR and conducted by the Election Study

1. David A. Ochmanek et al., *Inflection Point: How to Reverse the Erosion of U.S. and Allied Military Power and Influence* (Santa Monica, Calif.: the Rand Corporation) , 39-41.

2. John H. Aldrich et al., "Foreign Policy and the Electoral Connection," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 9 (Jun. 2006) , 447-502.

Center at National Chengchi University to investigate the supportive attitudes of the Taiwanese public toward national defense.³

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows: Section 2 outlines the cross-year trends in public opinion regarding increasing defense spending. Section 3 focuses on exploring issues related to arms acquisition, analyzing the public attitudes toward arms purchases from the United States and the development of indigenous weapons. Section 4 utilizes survey data to analyze the changing trends in self-defense awareness of the Taiwanese public. Finally, the conclusion summarizes our preliminary findings and policy implications.

SUPPORT FOR INCREASING DEFENSE EXPENDITURE

According to data from the China Power Project of the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS),⁴ the PLA not only routinely operates military aircraft and ships in the sea and airspace surrounding Taiwan, but also is continuously escalating the frequency and intensity of military encroachment. China poses a significant threat to the peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait. Previous studies suggested that the public's perception of threat plays a crucial role in influencing their support for the growth of the defense budget.⁵ In this paper, we assess public attitudes toward defense expenditure using a survey item that asked respondents, "Do you approve or disapprove of the government reducing the budget in other areas to prioritize the defense budget?" Figure 1 plots the changes in attitudes toward defense spending among the people of Taiwan between 2022 and 2023.

The results indicate that in March 2022, approximately 42% of respondents favored prioritizing an increase in the defense budget. However, in the second wave of the survey conducted in March 2023, over 56% expressed support for reallocating funds from other areas to prioritize an increase in the defense budget. In addition,

3. The data used herein are taken entirely from the Taiwan National Defense Survey (TNDS) of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR) (<https://indsr.org.tw/safetyInvestigation?uid=45>). The TNDS is conducted by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University on behalf of INDSR. The author would like to thank the aforementioned organizations for providing the data. However, the contents of this article are the sole responsibility of the author.

4. Gerald C. Brown and Ben Lewis, "Taiwan ADIZ Violations," *China Power Project* (CSIS), <https://chinapower.csis.org/data/taiwan-adiz-violations/>, access date: Sep. 14, 2023.

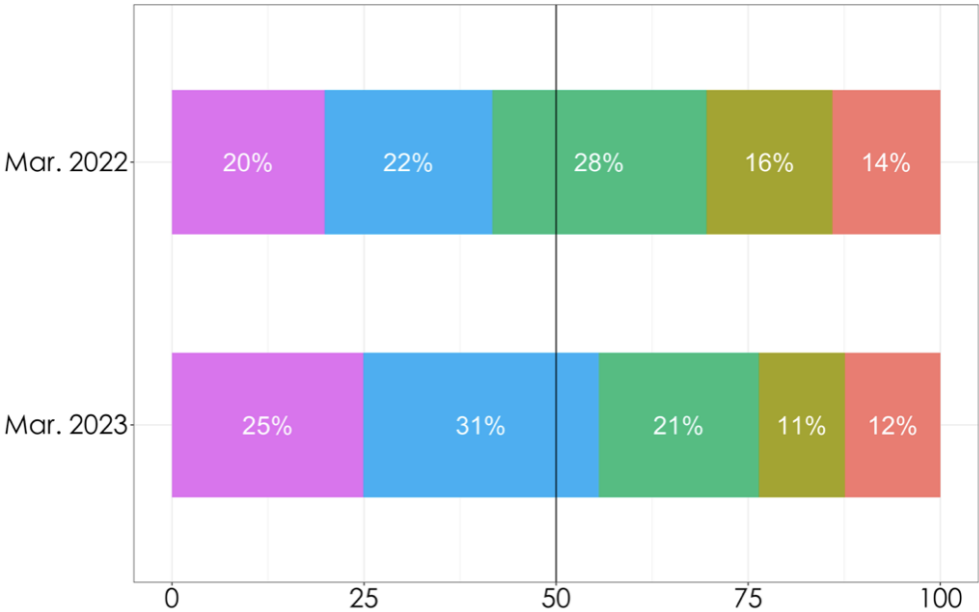
5. Erik M. Fay, "Individual and Contextual Influences on Public Support for Military Spending in NATO," *Defence and Peace Economics* 31, no. 7 (Sep. 2019) , 762-785.

a recent report also pointed out that most Taiwanese citizens believe the defense budget is insufficient and conditionally support raising it to 3% of GDP.⁶ These results suggest that Taiwanese citizens endorse augmenting defense expenditure to address the growing military threat posed by the CCP.

Figure 1. Public Attitudes toward Defense Budget

Q: Do you approve or disapprove of the government reducing the budget in other areas and prioritizing the defense budget?

Strongly approve Approve Disapprove Strongly disapprove NA



Note: NA includes don't know, no opinion, it depends, or refuse to answer.

Source: TNS.

6. Kuan-chen Lee, "min zhong you tiao jian zhi chi guo fang yu suan zeng jia zhi GDP de 3%" [民眾有條件支持國防預算增加至 GDP 的 3% Citizens Conditionally support increasing the Defense Budget to 3% of the GDP], *guo fang an quan ji shi ping xi* [國防安全即時評析 Real-time Analysis] Dec. 11, 2023, <https://indsr.org.tw/focus?typeid=38&uid=11&pid=2681>.

SUPPORTING ARMS PURCHASES AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS WEAPONS

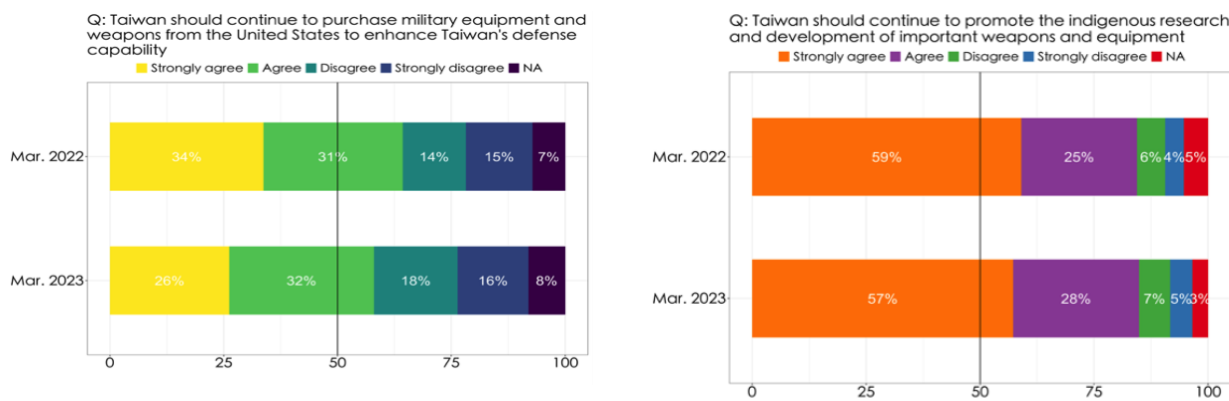
In addition to endorsing an increase in the defense budget, the Taiwanese public also demonstrates its commitment to strengthening defense capabilities through support for arms purchases from the United States and the development of indigenous weapons.⁷

The left panel of Figure 2 depicts public attitudes toward arms purchases from the United States between 2022 and 2023. In March 2022, about 65% agreed with the statement that “Taiwan should continue to purchase military equipment and weapons from the United States to enhance Taiwan’s defense capabilities.” In the second wave of the survey in 2023, while there was a slight decrease in the proportion of support for purchasing weapons from the United States, six out of ten respondents still expressed agreement with military procurement.

The Taiwanese government has actively involved civilian efforts in promoting independent defense. In addition to domestically produced warships like the Tuo Chiang-class (沱江) and Yushan-class (玉山), and the production of the Brave Eagle (勇鷹) advanced jet trainer, a domestically built submarine prototype named Hai Kun (海鯤) has successfully undergone underwater testing. These tangible achievements have garnered public support for the independent development of critical weapons systems. As illustrated in the right panel of Figure 2, approximately 85% of the respondents approved the development of indigenous weapons. The overwhelming support for independent defense indicates a keen awareness among the public of the rapidly changing international situation. To ensure that national defense remains unaffected by fluctuations in the global environment, Taiwan should persist in promoting the indigenous research and development of key weapons systems.

7. Public support for defense, particularly in terms of arms purchases, is constrained by the overall scale of the national budget. This issue mirrors the commonly referenced concept in literature known as “guns versus butter” — the trade-off between military expenditure and domestic spending. However, policies in democracies may face difficulty in implementation if they lack public support, even with sufficient financial budgets. Hence, this issue is not just about budget constraints. Furthermore, as NATO requires member states to spend 2% of their GDP on defense, this defense expenditure, including arms purchases, symbolizes a country’s commitment to self-defense and collective security.

Figure 2. Support for Arms Purchases and Development of Indigenous Weapons



Note: NA includes don't know, no opinion, it depends, or refuse to answer.

Source: TNDS.

DEMONSTRATING STRONG RESOLVE FOR SELF-DEFENSE

One of the most crucial lessons Taiwan can draw from the Russo-Ukrainian War is the importance of maintaining unwavering determination in the face of an adversary. With this kind of resolve, even a small country can stand up to a formidable foe. In fact, as advocated by Taiwan's former Chief of the General Staff Lee Hsi-min, demonstrating the determination to resist an adversary is an indispensable key element at all levels, whether in "avoiding war," "deterrence of war," or "winning war."⁸ Using survey data, we examine whether the people of Taiwan have sufficient willingness to resist a potential Chinese invasion.

The TNDS has asked respondents since 2021: "If China really invades Taiwan, would you be willing or unwilling to fight to defend it?" The results are shown in Figure 3. Overall, the people of Taiwan demonstrate a consistent level of determination to resist, with the percentage willing to defend Taiwan fluctuating between 65% and 75% over the years. The polling data on Taiwan's willingness to fight surpasses that of Ukraine before the Russian invasion of Ukraine.⁹ However, it is important to highlight that the willingness of Taiwanese people to resist

8. His-min Lee, *tai wan de sheng suan yi xiao zhi da de bu dui cheng zhan lue quan tai wan ren du ying liao jie de zheng ti fang wei gou xiang* [台灣的勝算：以小制大的不對稱戰略，全台灣人都應了解的整體防衛構想 *The Overall Defense Concept: An Asymmetric Approach to Taiwan's Defense*] (Taipei: Linking, 2022), 184-187.

9. Multiple polls indicated that the Ukrainian willingness to resist was at a rate around 52% before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. See Tor Bukkvoll and Frank Brundtland Steder, "War and the Willingness to Resist and Fight in Ukraine," *Problems of Post-Communism*, (Dec. 5, 2023) <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10758216.2023.2277767?src=exp-la>.

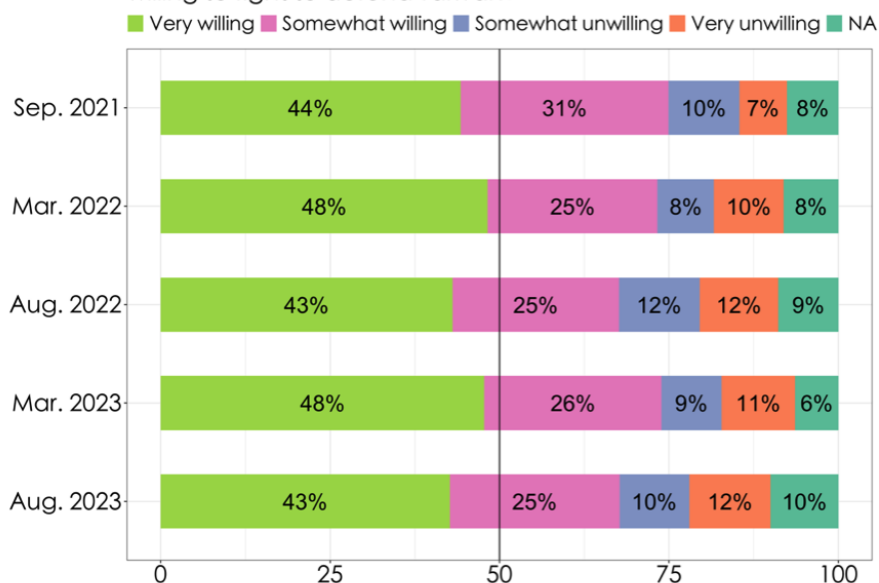
experienced a significant decline after large-scale military exercises by the CCP. For instance, following the CCP's encirclement military exercises around Taiwan in August 2022, the percentage of Taiwanese willing to resist decreased by about 5% compared to the previous survey. Additionally, after President Tsai Ing-wen's diplomatic visit with stopovers in the U.S. in April 2023, the PLA conducted another major military exercise, resulting in a further decline in the August 2023 survey figures. This suggests that the CCP's military exercises may have a temporary impact on the morale and sentiments of the Taiwanese people. The fluctuations in people's willingness to resist the enemy could be attributed to the CCP's cognitive warfare against Taiwan. According to observations by the Taiwan FactCheck Center,¹⁰ both the PLA's military drills in August 2022 and April 2023 involved extensive information manipulation, fostering a societal atmosphere of fear of imminent war. Therefore, in the short term, Taiwan needs to strengthen its social and psychological resilience to mitigate the impact of disinformation campaigns on public morale. In the long term, sustaining the resolve of Taiwanese citizens to resist requires enhancing the capabilities of the Taiwanese military, fostering cooperative relations with allies, and solidifying a consensus within Taiwan.¹¹

10. "Nancy Pelosi's Asia Tour," *Taiwan FactCheck Center*, <https://fqc-taiwan.org.tw/topic/7969>. "Apr. 2023 President Tsai's Oversea Trip VS. China Military Drills," *Taiwan FactCheck Center*, <https://fqc-taiwan.org.tw/topic/9049>.

11. Kuan-chen Lee and Ching-hsin Yu, "wei tai wan er zhan? lie xiang shi yan de tan suo" [為台灣而戰？列項實驗的探索 Fighting for Taiwan? An Exploration Using List Experiments], *wen ti yu yan jiu* [問題與研究 Issues & Studies] 62, no. 4 (Dec. 2023), 105-134.

Figure 3. Taiwanese Resolve for Self-Defense

Q: If China really invades Taiwan by force, would you be willing to fight to defend Taiwan?



Note: NA includes don't know, no opinion, it depends, or refuse to answer.

Source: TNDS.

CONCLUSION

Through analyzing public attitudes toward defense budgets, weapon acquisition, and self-defense, this article explores Taiwanese citizens' support for national defense. Our research reveals that most Taiwanese citizens favor increasing the defense budget, approve of arms purchases from the U.S., and advocate the development of indigenous weapons. Furthermore, there is a certain level of willingness to resist in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. These pro-defense sentiments not only play a crucial deterrent role against China's ambitions for Taiwan but also act as a loudspeaker, conveying Taiwan's determination to defend itself to the international community. In the face of growing threats from China, the new government following the 2024 Taiwan elections, regardless of which political party takes power, should not overlook the public's expectation of strengthened national defense. This article does not advocate engaging in an arms race with China, but Taiwan's security should not depend solely on the goodwill of mainland leaders. Taiwan must continue to invest wisely in national defense, enhancing its military's capabilities and readiness within the constraints of limited resources. Furthermore, the new government's defense policy should maintain open communication with the

populace, seeking their support and mobilizing all-out defense efforts. Only by doing so can Taiwan make the Chinese leadership aware of the heavy costs of war and deter them from initiating an invasion.

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THE CNN EFFECT IN COGNITIVE WARFARE - COGNITIVE MUTATION

Wen-Ping Liu

INTRODUCTION

Cognitive warfare has raised global concerns since 2015, with some significant events including the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 and Russia's interference in the U.S. presidential election in 2016.¹

Many have made efforts in the domain, and a lot of excellent articles have extensively discussed cognitive warfare recently.² However, the actual situation is that the various terms have not been standardized so far, such as whether cognitive warfare is the same as influence operations, psychological warfare,... etc., not to mention the further study of the various new concepts of cognitive warfare.

Another myth that has thrown cognitive warfare research into disarray is that scholars of cognitive warfare often focus on the aspect of "using messages to induce specific behaviors in the target audience over a long period of time." However, as the goal of cognitive warfare attack is to change the audience's mind or cognition

1. Niklas Nilsson, Mikael Weissmann, Björn Palmertz, Henrik Häggström, "Security Challenges in the Grey Zone: Hybrid Threats and Hybrid Warfare," in Mikael Weissmann, Niklas Nilsson, Björn Palmertz, Per Thunholm ed(s), *Hybrid Warfare: Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations* (Ireland: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021): 3 ; Gregory F. Treverton, "An American View: Hybrid Threat and Intelligence," Weissmann et al. *Hybrid Warfare Security and Asymmetric Conflict in International Relations*, 37.

2. See Dean S. Hartley, Kenneth O. Hobson, *Cognitive Superiority* (Switzerland: Springer, 2021); Alexander Kott, ed, *Battle of Cognition* (Westport: Praeger, 2007); Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive* (New Haven: Yale University, 2007); Duncan J. Watts, *Small Worlds* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999); Freder-ick T. C. Yu, *Mass Persuasion in Communist China* (New York: United States of America, 1964); Keith Dear, "Artificial Intelligence, Security, and Society," in Timothy Clack and Robert Johnson ed(s), *The World Information War* (Y.N.: Routledge, 2021), 231-255; Keir Giles, "Russia Information Warfare," in Clack and Johnson ed(s), *The World Information War*, 139-161; "Journalism, 'Fake News' and Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training," UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/fightfakenews>.

and make the audience change their behavior to favor the perpetrators, 'the long period of time' is not necessary to change the audience's behavior. The key point is changing the audience's behavior regardless if by long-time influence or short time. In other words, the phenomenon of a sudden change in cognition over a short period of time that results in a change in behavior has not received much attention from scholars. The author calls the phenomena "cognitive mutation". After a lapse of many years, academic research on the issue of "cognitive mutation" not only lacks unified terminology and concept, but also lacks even a basic awareness of the issue.

If cognitive warfare perpetrators use shocking information to attack an audience that has not enough time to respond to the attack, letting the perpetrators achieve the goal, is this a kind of cognitive warfare attack?

In other words, research of cognitive warfare limited to 'long time influence' for understanding might neglect a case, or feature of 'cognitive mutation' in cognitive warfare which is induced by the CNN effect and which can also achieve the desired purpose by cognitive warfare operations.

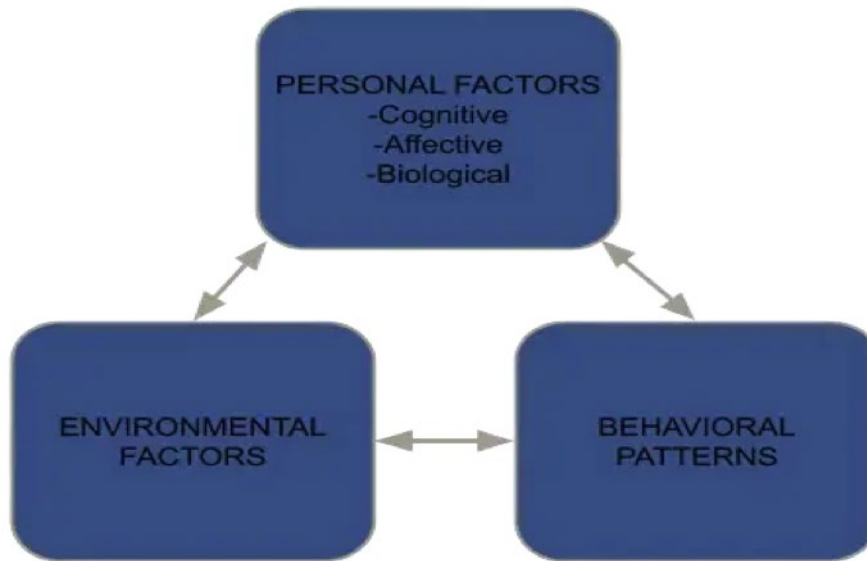
This paper discusses the phenomenon of "cognitive mutation" induced by the CNN effect, and hopes to form a new concept of cognitive warfare research by analysis of practice events. By doing this, the paper aims to contribute to theories of cognitive warfare.

THE THEORETICAL BASIS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Although there are various views on cognitive warfare, it is a common core argument that the transmission of information changes human cognition and then changes human behavior to the advantage of the initiator of cognitive warfare. As to how human behavior changes, various psychological or sociological theories can be used as the basis for explanation, which is a very important foundation in the study of cognitive warfare; because the field of cognitive warfare mainly affects human mental activities and its influence is very extensive, so, in addition to sociology and psychology, it can also be explained by political theories or other theories, and even by theories of communism.

Among the many sociological or psychological theories, we can pick out a few representative theoretical frameworks as follows:

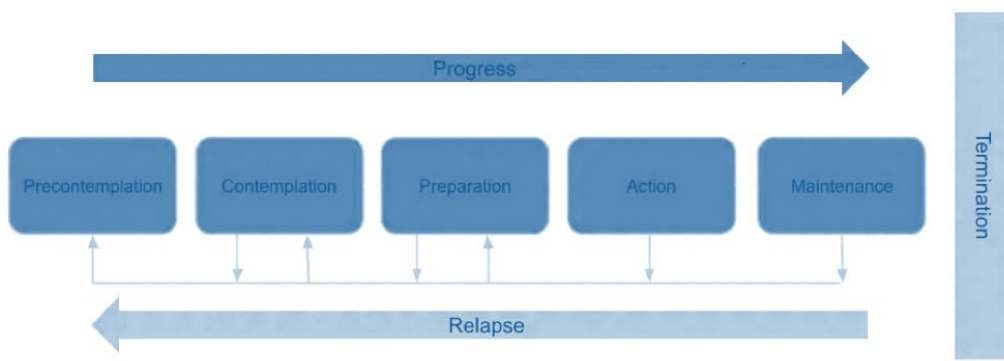
Figure 1. Social cognitive theory model



Source: Nicole Celestine, "What Is Behavior Change in Psychology? 5 Models and Theories," *PositivePsychology*, Aug. 14, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.com/behavior-change/>.

Figure 1 is very easy to understand, i.e., "personal factors", "environmental factors" and "behavioral patterns" work together to influence people's behavior.

Figure 2. The Transtheoretical Model/stages of Change



Source: Nicole Celestine, "What Is Behavior Change in Psychology? 5 Models and Theories," *PositivePsychology*, August 14, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.com/behavior-change/>.

According to figure 2, the six stages of change are:

1. Precontemplation: The individual is not intending to change their behavior because subjective and objective constraints make it impossible for the individual to perceive the need to change his or her behavior, or even because of experience of failure.
2. Contemplation: Wanting to change but having to bear pressure of failure.
3. Preparation: Actively preparing for change.
4. Action: Actively engaging in change.
5. Maintenance: Maintaining the results of change. It is important to note, however, that a relapse, or regression back to pre-change behavior, can occur at any stage in the process of changing behavior.
6. Termination: The change is complete and relatively stable.³

Compared to theories in political science, communism or other disciplines, psychological or sociological theories, which focus more on human behavior, reveal that behavioral change is not only influenced by the environment, messages, abilities, opportunities and other contexts, but also relapses to the original behavioral patterns of the past due to a variety of changes in circumstances. In other words, behavioral changes can be long-term or short-term. The phenomena of behavioral change and relapse presented in Figure 2 are especially clear.

Theoretical perspectives on Communism, there probably is Antonio Francesco Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony, and theoretical perspectives in political science, there is Joseph Samuel Nye's theory of "soft power", which can be used as a basis for the cognitive war to change perception and then behavior. These ideas of altered cognition leading to altered behavior are similar to the principles of cognitive warfare.

In accordance with Gramsci's essence of cultural hegemony: through social institutions such as education, the media, the family, religion, politics,... etc., the propagation of dominant ideologies -- the collection of worldviews, beliefs, assumptions, and values, laws, etc. -- realizes 'consent' to the dominant group's rule.⁴ To put it simply, the ruling class uses various tools to disseminate specific cognitive information and to shape the general public's cognition in a specific way,

3. Nicole Celestine, "What Is Behavior Change in Psychology? 5 Models and Theories," *PositivePsychology*, Aug. 14, 2021, <https://positivepsychology.com/behavior-change/>.

4. Nicki Lisa Cole, "wen hua ba quan de jie ding [文化霸權的界定 Definition of cultural hegemony]," *Eferit*, <https://zhtw.eferit.com/%E6%96%87%E5%8C%96%E9%9C%B8%E6%AC%8A%E7%9A%84%E7%95%8C%E5%AE%9A/>.

so that the general public will eventually consider the various acts of the ruling class as reasonable and be submissive. According to Nye, there are three sources of "soft power": its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority). According to Nye, when a country's culture includes universal values and its policies promote value and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates. Cultural influence is more powerful than the others, Nye emphasizes the process of changing the target with "soft power", focusing on culture as the core, focusing on the attraction of nurturing to change the audience's perception and ultimately the behavior of the target.⁵

The theoretical statements of sociology, psychology, political science, and even communism all focus on influencing the audience over a long period of time, ultimately resulting in a change in their cognition and behavior. As a result, the researcher or the general public can unknowingly fall into the myth that a war of cognition must be fostered over a long period of time by means of a message to the audience, so as to bring about a change in the audience's cognition before a change in their behavior can be achieved. However, a closer look at the purpose of cognitive warfare reveals that its primary purpose is behavioral change, and it is not concerned with whether or not behavioral change can be sustained, or how long it takes to bring about behavioral change. Thus, cognitive warfare is not necessarily limited to understanding that long-term cognitive change is sufficient to change behavior.

CNN EFFECT AND COGNITIVE MUTATION

In actuality, the attacker may only need to make the audience change their cognition and do something favorable to the attacker at the critical moment in order to accomplish the purpose of cognitive warfare. Therefore, in the field of cognitive warfare research, we should not ignore the pursuit of the target audience with the aim to change their cognition in a short period of time, and to perform behaviors that are beneficial to the attacker at the critical moment. The process of sudden cognitive change and behavioral change in a short period of time can be called "cognitive mutation," when the audience changes their behavior in a short period of time due to a time-critical, high-impact message.

5. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 11-15.

What is the reason for the short-term and hasty change of audience perception? The author believes it is the “CNN effect.”

What is the CNN effect?

Although the CNN effect has been discussed in academic circles for many years, some scholars have argued that more evidence is needed to prove the existence of this effect, but it is accepted that it is real.⁶

Some scholars insist the "CNN effect" study suggests that the media determines how and what news is reported, and that these processes mean that news content is only disseminated to the public after it has been filtered and scrutinized by media companies, and that it influences government policymaking through its constant repetition and widespread dissemination;⁷ In the field of cognitive warfare, the CNN effect has the characteristics of being filtered, scrutinized, fast, simple, rough, and directional by (media companies), and this characteristic has been deepened in contemporary society where 3C products are widely available. The impact of the CNN effect on cognitive change has gone beyond the commonly held notion that prolonged immersion alters cognition, and has been characterized by sudden, media-driven changes that make it difficult for the audience to make rational judgments and to react irrationally in a hurry. It's important to note that the so-called “CNN effect” has long gone beyond the traditional media reach, and as the popularity of 3C products has expanded to many social media outlets, the effect has expanded to include the influence of various social media outlets on their audience.⁸

This kind of blitzkrieg, "hit-and-run" war of perception is obviously extremely difficult to defend against before something happens, and it's highly appropriate in the heat of an election. The most common and consistent scenario in Taiwan to influence the public to make voting decisions in favor of the organizers in the runup to election day is the pre-election "campaign rally activity (造勢)". But the “CNN effect” should not be limited to "rally activity " alone.

6. Eytan Gilboa, "The CNN Effect: The Search for a Communication Theory of International Relations, *Political Communication* vol. 22, no. 1 (2005): 27-44. Gilboa E, Jumbert MG, Miklian J, Robinson P., "Moving Media and Conflict Studies beyond the CNN Effect," *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 4 (2016): pp. 654-672.

7. Kaouthar Benabid, "What is the CNN Effect and Why is it Relevant Today?", *Al Jazeera Media Institute*, Feb. 22, 2021, <https://institute.aljazeera.net/en/ajr/article/1365>.

8. L. Fenstermacher, D. Uzcha, K. Larson, C. Vitiello, S. Shellman, "New perspectives on Cognitive Warfare," *SPIE*, Jun. 14, 2023, <https://www.spiedigitallibrary.org/conference-proceedings-of-spie/12547/125470I/New-perspectives-on-cognitive-warfare/10.1117/12.2666777.short>.

In terms of the “CNN effect” in Taiwan's past elections, in addition to the usual "rally activity", famous cases include: The "Two Bullets"(兩顆子彈) incident during the 2004 presidential election (Took place in the afternoon of March 19, 2004, and the presidential election was on March 20); The "paid walkers"(走路工) in the 2006 Kaohsiung mayoral election (which occurred late at night on December 8, 2006, and the mayoral election vote was held the next day); On the eve of the 2016 presidential and legislative elections, Zhou Ziyu(周子瑜), a Taiwanese member of the South Korean girl group TWICE, was reported by China-based celebrity Huang An (黃安) to be a "Taiwan separatist" for raising the national flag of the Republic of China (ROC), triggering a boycott by Mainland Chinese netizens. On the night before the election (the night of January 15, 2016, voting for the presidential election was next day), JYP Entertainment arranged for Zhou Ziyu to make a public apology in a recorded video, triggering a large portion of the Taiwanese public to be furious at the Mainland's suppression of Zhou Ziyu. After the election, TVBS released a poll saying that the Zhou Ziyu incident had triggered an increase of 4% in the number of people who voted, equivalent to 500,000 votes; Taiwan Think Tank released a poll saying that 11.9% of the respondents were affected by the Zhou Ziyu incident in terms of voting choices for regional legislature members; and 11.4% of the respondents were affected by this incident in terms of choices for party votes, thus hitting the election results of the Kuomintang (KMT) hard.⁹ Prior to the 2020 presidential election, before the end of 2019, the Wang Liqiang(王立強) espionage case was the focus of attention (it occurred in November 2019, the presidential election was on January 11, 2020); after a long investigation, ultimately. no one was prosecuted and punished,¹⁰ and the case has been questioned by a number of parties as an election operation. Also, on the eve of the 2024 election, CNN reported that Taiwan's famous band Mayday was supposedly pressured by the Communist Party of China (CCP) to take a stand in support of Beijing's "One China" statement (which took place on December 28, 2023, and voting in the presidential election was on January 13, 2024), which could be seen as an attempt to replicate the effect

9. cai jia yun[蔡佳妘], "bao bing gui piao 、 zou lu gong 、 319qiang ji an ...hui gu na xie nian xuan qian zhi ye zhen han dan: 'zhe jian shi' rang suo you tai wan ren dou nu le [抱病跪票、走路工、319 槍擊案 ... 回顧那些年選前之夜震撼彈：『這件事』讓所有台灣人都怒了]," *feng chuan mei* [風傳媒], Nov. 22, 2018, <https://www.storm.mg/lifestyle/644019?page=2>.

10. xue yi jia, lin zhi jian[薛宜家, 林志堅], "xiang xin fu fu she wang li qiang gong die an gao jian que ding bu qi su[向心夫婦涉王立強共諜案 高檢確定不起訴]," *gong shi xin wen wang* [公視新聞網], Aug. 17, 2023, <https://news.pts.org.tw/article/651931>.

of the Zhou Ziyu incident.¹¹ In order to prevent the “CNN effect” from occurring, the Taiwan media also countered by reminding voters not to be deceived.¹² These cases had a significant impact on the election results in Taiwan.

These cases show that the “CNN effect” should not be limited to a short period of time, but should also take into account the complexity of the incident and the ease of clarification. In other words, even if the time is not too short, but the complexity of the incident is such that the attacked party is unable to clarify in a short period of time, the effect of influencing the audience to make irrational responses and achieve a sudden change in perception can be achieved. For example, the aforementioned incident of Wang Liqiang was not only outside the country but also involved a highly confidential case of espionage, which is obviously more complicated in terms of verification and clarification than the “two bullets,” the “walkers' incident,” the Zhou Ziyu incident, and the Mayday incident. Therefore, the cognitive mutation time of the Wang Liqiang incident could be lengthened. The chance of cognitive mutation is relatively lower for other events where the attacked party can be clarified if the time is lengthened. Therefore, the cognitive mutation generated by the “CNN effect” is based on the interplay of the two variables "Complexity of the Incident" and "Response Time ", which can be summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Distribution of Mutation Effects

		Complexity of the Incident	
		Complex	Simple
Response Time	Shortness	1	2
	Long	2	3

Source: The author.

11. “zhong guo shi ya wu yue tian CNN : tai wan guan yuan zhi yi ren zao kong qian da ya [中國施壓五月天 CNN：台灣官員指藝人遭空前打壓],” CNA, Dec. 28, 2023, <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aip/202312280377.aspx>.

12. zhu bi shi[主筆室], “zhong pang kuai ping: wu yue tian zao shi ya ting Zhong? kong pa you shi chu kou zhuan nei xiao [【重磅快評】五月天遭施壓挺中？恐怕又是出口轉內銷], *lian he bao*[聯合報], Dec. 28, 2023, <https://udn.com/news/story/123307/7672569>.

The cognitive mutation strength of the “CNN effect” is necessarily stronger in the case of short response time and extremely complex events in block number 1 than in the case of long response time and simple complexity of events in block number 3. As for the cases with different response times and event complexity, such as block number 2, the cognitive mutation strength of the “CNN effect” is between block 1 and block 3.

From this discussion, it can be deduced that any message that can cause the audience to make hasty decisions due to time pressure or inability to consider rationally can be categorized as a “CNN effect”. As a result, it is conceivable that a “CNN effect” attack could be launched at any time to influence leaders, military personnel, managers, police officers, the general public ... to make hasty and wrong decisions that could lead to social disruption, chaos, or national disorder, ... etc. Therefore, the utilization and prevention of “CNN effect” is the same as the utilization and prevention of cognitive warfare, there is no distinction between wartime and peacetime, it can happen anytime and anywhere.

The message sent by the “CNN effect” is also similar to that sent by other forms of cognitive warfare, in that its effects do not follow exactly the settings of the attackers, and may be counterproductive or ineffective. Therefore, there are obvious challenges in choosing the messages to send, and it is worth exploring whether the discovery of "deception" by the audience will lead to a diminishing marginal benefit in the audience's response to similar messages in the future.

CONCLUSION: CHALLENGES TO CONCEPTUALIZATION OF COGNITIVE CHANGE

The “CNN effect” is, of course, concerned with irrational decisions made in a short period of time and in a hurry, but proposing this concept must be challenged by the following unresolved issues:

How short is the so-called "rush" time?

Can the audience react to a particular message in the direction expected by the cognitive warfare initiator?

Faced with diminishing marginal benefits or irrational responses from the public after being deceived, does the trust in the initiators decrease, or is the most important sense of trust in sending messages in the cognitive warfare even destroyed, so that the initiators will be constrained in the cognitive warfare in the future? The initiators may even lose the ability to initiate cognitive warfare.

Do the blamed “CNN effect” beneficiaries have a more covert manner after being blamed?

How does the complexity of the incident interact with response time? This remains to be studied.

These are the issues that must be further investigated in cognitive warfare research regarding the cognitive mutation-CNN effect, which needs to be integrated across countries and disciplines in order to prevent cognitive mutation from occurring and to safeguard people's right to know.

Although there are many issues that need to be researched, the cognitive war initiators will not wait for us to research clearly before launching attacks in the form of cognitive mutation. In the face of the threat of cognitive mutation, what the governments of various countries need to do urgently at present in the face of the attack of cognitive mutation is to make a quick response, publish the truth as soon as possible, so that the real situation can be presented quickly, and try to minimize hasty decision-making and erroneous decision-making due to the "CNN effect". This is clearly a task that governments must endeavor to engage in at the present time.

Today, when global cognitive warfare research has just begun, clarifying individual concepts and building an overall theory really requires the efforts of all parties.

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THE STAKEHOLDER STRATEGIES FOR THE SOUTH CHINA SEA CODE OF CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS: AN ASEAN PERSPECTIVE

Ya-Wen Yu
G. G. Celiz

INTRODUCTION

The South China Sea disputes have garnered significant international attention, prompting apprehension regarding regional stability. The South China Sea, which is the focus of territorial claims by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, is strategically important due to its rich natural resources and vital shipping routes, making it a focus of geopolitical tensions.

The core of the conflicts center around competing territorial claims involving islands, reefs, and maritime areas. Specifically, China's expansive claims, illustrated by the controversial 2023 South China Sea new map, extend over substantial parts of the sea, leading to claims that overlap those of neighboring states. These disputes escalate geopolitical tensions, give rise to occasional confrontations, and involve a complex web of diplomatic and legal efforts.

Recognizing the exigency for a regulatory framework, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and China have entered protracted deliberations on the formulation of the South China Sea Code of Conduct (COC). The COC seeks to offer normative guidelines to avert maritime incidents, and cultivate a more stable regional milieu. Instead of adopting the "legally binding" system, which is the typical design of Western multilateralism, the COC is executed with the "rule-based framework" and

focuses more on seeking consensus, rather than making a law-like rule set. We think this is the reason why COC could successfully gain support from China and SCS claimants.

Nevertheless, the protracted nature of negotiations underscores the intricate task of reconciling national interests, historical grievances, and geopolitical considerations of the involved parties.¹ Therefore, this policy analysis focuses on COC's background, logic of establishment, and the potential to be the model guiding a more functional and effective regional platform of dialogue.

DIVERGENCES FOR NEGOTIATIONS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTES

The Code of Conduct endeavors to address territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea, seeking to mitigate the potential for conflict. This initiative commenced in August 2017 when the framework gained endorsement from the foreign ministers of ASEAN and China. The primary objective is to construct a rules-based framework that outlines standards, guiding the conduct of involved parties and promoting collaboration in the region. The term “rules-based framework” is employed instead of “legally binding,” although criticism arose regarding its lack of specificity, largely reiterating the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.

Divergent perspectives within ASEAN member nations complicate matters. The Final Clauses section introduces the concepts of “nature” and “entry into force”, potentially instigating future discussions on a legally binding Code of Conduct. However, the requirement for approval by all eleven parties and China's resistance to enforceable deals limiting its autonomy in the South China Sea diminish the likelihood of such an outcome.² A milestone was achieved in June 2018 with the release of the Single Draft South

1. Mateusz Chatys, “The Code of Conduct: A Way to Move Forward with the South China Sea Dispute?”, *Pulaski Policy Paper* no. 31, Jul. 4, 2023. <https://pulaski.pl/en/the-code-of-conduct-a-way-to-move-forward-with-the-south-china-sea-dispute-2/>.

2. Ian Storey, “Anatomy of the Code of Conduct Framework for the South China Sea,” *The National Bureau of Asian Research*, Aug. 24, 2017, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/anatomy-of-the-code-of-conduct-framework-for-the-south-china-sea/>.

China Sea Code of Conduct Negotiating Text (SDNT), indicating progress in negotiations.³ Nevertheless, the slow pace and challenges in addressing contested claims while managing inter-state relations within ASEAN persist.⁴

Crucially, the Code of Conduct does not aim to resolve territorial or maritime disputes but rather to provide guidelines for managing disagreements concerning jurisdiction over water, seabed, and airspace, excluding the use of force. Conversely, it seeks to uphold freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea, aligning with universally recognized principles of international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).⁵

COC NEGOTIATIONS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA: ASEAN CHALLENGES AND GLOBAL DYNAMICS

The ASEAN region assumes a significant role in the South China Sea dispute, involving multiple member states and China. ASEAN's involvement is shaped by its internal dynamics, adherence to the ASEAN Way, and the intricate nature of the disputes. Geographically, ASEAN's geographical concentration holds implications for its stance on the South China Sea issue. While some member states possess maritime borders in the South China Sea and are directly embroiled in the disputes, others lack a shoreline in the South China Sea. This divergence has led to varying positions within ASEAN, with some members inclined towards compromises with China.⁶ The absence of a unified ASEAN response to the territorial dispute is apparent, marked by challenges in reaching a common position due to diverse interests and relationships with China among member states.⁷

3. Mateusz Chatys, "The Code of Conduct: A Way to Move Forward with the South China Sea Dispute?," *Casimir Pulaski Foundation*, Jul. 4, 2023, <https://pulaski.pl/en/the-code-of-conduct-a-way-to-move-forward-with-the-south-china-sea-dispute-2/>.

4. Jagannath P. Panda, "Code of Conduct needed for South China Sea," *Institute for Security and Development Policy*, Sep. 2020, <https://isdp.eu/publication/code-of-conduct-needed-for-south-chinasea/>.

5. South China Sea Expert Working Group, "A Blueprint for South China Sea Code of Conduct," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, 2018, <https://amti.csis.org/blueprint-for-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/>.

6. Leticia Simões, "The Role of ASEAN in the South China Sea Disputes," *E-International Relations*, 2022, <https://www.e-ir.info/2022/06/23/the-role-of-asean-in-the-south-china-sea-disputes/>.

7. Michael York, "ASEAN Ambiguous Role in Resolving South China Sea Disputes," *Indonesian Journal of International Law* volume 12, no. 3 (2015), <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/ijil/vol12/iss3/2/>.

In recent years, we have witnessed intense debates on the Code of Conduct (COC) in the South China Sea (SCS). Challenges such as sluggish negotiations, recent provocative actions by China, disparate views within ASEAN, and the involvement of other allied countries have been prominent. Notably, in July 2023, China and ASEAN reached an agreement on new guidelines to expedite negotiations for a binding COC in the South China Sea. Despite this, the negotiations have been sluggish, with China showing reluctance towards an agreement limiting its freedom of action.⁸ Similarly, in November 2023, an article in *The Diplomat* argued that a COC cannot be built on a foundation of bad faith, citing China's disregard for international law and its aggressive actions in the South China Sea. The article also emphasized that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the 2016 arbitral tribunal ruling have already established laws and principles constraining China's aggression. For instance, China employs its military bases strategically to disrupt lawful activities in the exclusive economic zones of neighboring countries.⁹ Furthermore, one of the escalating concerns is China's persistent assertive activities in the region, including island-building and militarization, causing tension with other claimants such as the Philippines and Vietnam.

As China's persistent threats persist, a notable divide exists among ASEAN members on how to respond to China's territorial claims. While the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, and Brunei officially oppose China's claims, efforts to garner collective support from the remaining six members – Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Singapore, and Thailand – proved unsuccessful during the recent summit. The absence of Myanmar, due to the military seizing power in February 2021, underscores the challenges ASEAN faces in achieving a unified stance.¹⁰

8. Prashanth Parameswaran, "What's Behind the New China-ASEAN South China Sea Code of Conduct Talk Guide-lines?," *Asia Dispatches*, Jul. 25, 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/whats-behind-new-china-asean-south-china-sea-code-conduct-talk-guidelines>.

9. Powell, Raymond, "A South China Sea Code of Conduct Cannot Be Built on a Foundation of Bad Faith," *The Diplomat*, Nov. 18, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/11/a-south-china-sea-code-of-conductcannot-be-built-on-a-foundation-of-bad-faith/>

10. Chetra Chap, "ASEAN Remains Divided Over China's Assertiveness in South China Sea," *VOA News*, Sep. 12, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/amp/aseanremains-divided-over-china-s-assertiveness-in-south-china-sea/7264923.html>.

Finally, U.S. involvement influences the South China Sea disputes, encompassing freedom of navigation operations and support for ASEAN countries in defense capacity enhancement.¹¹ For example, in September 2023, naval drills in the South China Sea involving Japan, the United States, and the Philippines commenced. These drills followed a series of military engagements by Australia, Japan, and the United States over the previous two weeks, seeking to deter China from aggressive actions toward the Philippines, particularly concerning Philippines resupply missions to the grounded LST BRP Sierra Madre at Second Thomas Shoal. Territorial conflicts in the South China Sea involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Brunei have long been seen as a potential flashpoint and a delicate fault line in U.S.-China rivalry.¹²

SOUTH CHINA SEA CLAIMANTS' STRATEGIES TO COMPETE WITH CHINA IN THE COC NEGOTIATIONS

Given the recent incidents challenging the implementation of the Code of Conduct (COC), South China Sea (SCS) claimants implemented strategies to compete with China. These strategies aim to address the contested claims while managing inter-state relations across the ASEAN zone.

Nguyen (2020) emphasizes the significance of the SCS disputes, involving ASEAN members and actors with direct relations with ASEAN. In his view, he reiterated the impact of ASEAN's behavior and the lack of a unified position due to the "ASEAN Way," which emphasizes consensus-building and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states.¹³ The geographical concentration of ASEAN has implications for its stance on the SCS, with some members tending to vote for compromises with China. With this, diverse interests abound among the involved parties, emphasizing the necessity for initial dialogue among the four claimant nations—namely, the Philippines,

11. Congressional Research Service, "China Primer: South China Sea Disputes," *CRS Report*, Aug. 1, 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10607>.

12. Dzirhan Mahadzir, "Japanese, U.S., the Philippines Drill in the South China Sea"; "China Contests U.S. Position on Territorial Disputes," *USNI News*, Sep. 5, 2023, <https://news.usni.org/2023/09/05/japanese-u-s-the-philippines-drill-in-the-south-china-sea-china-contests-u-s-position-on-territorial-disputes>.

13. Michael Nguyen, "Forging consensus in the South China Sea," *The Interpreter*, Jan. 28, 2020, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/forging-consensus-south-china-sea>.

Vietnam, Brunei, and Malaysia. Prioritizing open discussions will enable the resolution of internal issues, particularly by addressing overlapping territorial claims. A pivotal step in this process involves reaching a consensus through a resolution that adheres to the principles outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the United Nations (UN). By doing so, these claimant nations demonstrate mutual respect and send a clear signal to China that they are committed to upholding a rules-based approach as dictated by international law.

In addition, according to John Ciorciari, ASEAN remains a vital diplomatic forum; however, its efficacy is hindered by the absence of consensus on key regional challenges. Ciorciari underscores the potential for individual ASEAN claimants to form more adaptable diplomatic and strategic alliances, drawing in external actors like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad).¹⁴

The Quad partners are Australia, India, Japan, and the United States. The combined naval strength of the Quad can ensure a balance of power in the SCS, benefiting smaller ASEAN states.¹⁵ We believe that the Quad presents a significant opportunity as a third-party entity to provide ASEAN members with a more balanced strategic approach towards engaging with China in the South China Sea. Rather than being viewed solely as a confrontational force, the Quad's potential lies in its capacity to serve as one among several multilateral frameworks conducive to upholding the principles outlined in the COC while fostering regional stability. By respecting the strategic autonomy of ASEAN countries and other stakeholders, the Quad can function as an external actor contributing positively to peace and stability in the region. This aligns with the consensus-driven approach of the COC and accommodates the diverse interests of the various regional states involved.

Convincing a third party to facilitate negotiations among the claimants is imperative, as this collaborative effort could prompt China to reassess its stance, realizing it is not in a favorable position. While the idea of a COC is presented, it is acknowledged that this may not be the ultimate solution,

14. Chetra Chap, "ASEAN Remains Divided Over China's Assertiveness in South China Sea," VOA News, Sep. 12, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/amp/aseanremains-divided-over-china-s-assertiveness-in-southchina-sea/7264923.html>.

15. Jagannath P. Panda, "Code of Conduct needed for South China Sea," *Institute for Security and Development Policy*, Sep. 2020, <https://isdip.eu/publication/code-of-conduct-needed-for-south-china-sea/>.

given the existing disputes among claimants predating their confrontation with China. Additionally, the COC's limitations, lacking enforcement powers, are highlighted, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that addresses both historical disputes and the current geopolitical challenges posed by China in the region.

COC'S ROLE IN SUSTAINING PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE SCS

COC stands as a pivotal agreement among regional nations, designed to foster peace and security in an area marred by territorial disputes. This comprehensive framework delineates regulations governing behavior, navigation, and resource exploration, with the overarching goal of averting conflicts and fostering long-term stability. A close examination of specific scenarios highlights the potential contributions of the COC to promote peace and security.

First, the COC serves as a catalyst for promoting dialogue and cooperation among the nations involved in the South China Sea disputes. By establishing channels for open communication and collaboration, the COC aims to create an environment conducive to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the prevention of further tensions. For example, negotiations for the COC have achieved progress, with the completion of the second reading of the Single Draft COC Negotiating Text and the adoption of a set of Guidelines for Accelerating the Early Conclusion of an Effective and Substantive COC in the South China Sea.

Moreover, the COC is anchored in the fundamental principle of respecting international law, notably the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This commitment to international legal norms provides a solid foundation for resolving disputes and ensures that the rights and interests of all parties are considered within a framework of established legal principles.¹⁶

Additionally, the COC addresses critical issues related to military activities and the use of force in the South China Sea. By setting clear parameters and guidelines, the COC seeks to mitigate the risk of military

16. Vu Hai Dang, "From the COC to a Code of Conduct for Maritime Engagements in Southeast Asia. Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, Sep. 25, 2023. <https://amti.csis.org/from-the-coc-to-a-code-of-conduct-for-maritime-engagements-in-southeast-asia/>.

confrontations and reduce the potential for escalations that could jeopardize regional peace and stability. A pertinent example highlighting the significance of the COC is the ongoing negotiations between China and ASEAN countries. These negotiations aim to replace the existing non-binding Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) with a binding and comprehensive COC. This shift underscores the commitment of the involved parties to elevate the level of agreement, moving beyond non-binding declarations to establish a legally binding framework that enhances accountability and ensures the effective implementation of agreed-upon principles.

Lastly, it can serve as a blueprint for a feasible mode. A blueprint for a South China Sea Code of Conduct includes commitments to resolve disputes by peaceful means, upholding freedom of navigation, and managing disagreements related to jurisdiction over water, seabed, and airspace without resorting to the threat or use of force.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper has examined recent debates surrounding the COC in the South China Sea, providing valuable insights into the multifaceted dynamics at play in the region. By exploring the strategies employed by claimants and understanding the countries actively advocating for COC principles, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the role this agreement plays in promoting peace and security.

The importance of the COC cannot be overstated. It serves as a crucial instrument for preventing and effectively managing conflicts in the South China Sea. Beyond conflict resolution, the COC addresses pressing security challenges and lays the groundwork for fostering regional cooperation. Its implementation is vital, serving as a guarantor for the interests of all stakeholders and contributing to the creation of a peaceful and prosperous environment in the region.

17. South China Sea Expert Working Group, "A Blueprint for South China Sea Code of Conduct," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, Oct. 11, 2018, <https://amti.csis.org/blueprintfor-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/>.

Looking forward, the COC opens the door to a multitude of future possibilities. The ongoing dialogues and engagements surrounding the COC present opportunities for deeper collaboration and enhanced trust among all parties involved in the South China Sea disputes. By actively seizing these possibilities, stakeholders can contribute to the establishment of a more secure, stable, and cooperative regional order.

All in all, the COC stands not only as a diplomatic framework but as a catalyst for positive change in the South China Sea. Its successful implementation holds the promise of a future where dialogue prevails over discord, cooperation trumps confrontation, and the shared interests of nations in the region are safeguarded for the well-being of all.

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