



Strategic Report

Growing Tensions in the Taiwan Strait and Implications for Canadian Interests

J. Michael Cole, 2026-09-17



Introduction

Arguably no other conflict on the planet today holds the potential of sparking the kind of superpower — and possibly nuclear — war than the Taiwan Strait. The effects of war over Taiwan, what with the high likelihood of involvement by the United States and Japan, would be truly global, costing the world economy trillions and causing disruptions to trade and supply chains that would far surpass the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As it revises its [Indo Pacific Strategy](#), Canada must also ensure it fully comprehends the stakes in the Taiwan Strait, and the substantial costs to its own national security should it fail to prepare accordingly to deal with a variety of future contingencies — chief among them a quarantine, naval blockade, or invasion of Taiwan by China.

Until a few years ago, especially since the end of the Cold War, few people paid attention to Taiwan or could even locate it on the world map. Recent developments, from China's often corrosive influence in our own societies and military muscle-flexing to the Covid-19 pandemic and the role that semiconductors play in our lives, have given prominence to Taiwan and what this young democracy means to our world.

Growing tensions over Taiwan's status as China becomes more self-confident and assertive are forcing regional powers and the international community to take a closer look at the situation. The risks of escalation and major armed conflict over Taiwan cannot be ignored anymore, as such a development would have dire consequences for the global economy and threaten to destabilize the world order as we know it. This paper addresses the main elements that have fueled this longstanding conflict and the measures adopted by Beijing in the past decade to increase the pressure on Taiwan. It then explores plausible escalatory scenarios and makes recommendations for possible responses by the international community, Canada included, to deter major conflict in the Taiwan Strait and, should deterrence fail, to mitigate the effects of a major contingency. Taiwan plays a pivotal, frontline role in the new cold war that is upon us, and the democratic camp cannot afford to remain unprepared for, or indifferent to, a potential crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Turning the screws: China's coercion against Taiwan in the past decade

Beijing's decision to increase the pressure on Taiwan dovetailed with China's growing assertiveness on the international stage, as well as growing frustration with its inability to coerce the Taiwanese people into acquiescing to its political demands on unification. From the militarization of the South China Sea in defiance of international law to espionage and political warfare targeting countries around the world — not to mention the [Belt and Road Initiative \(BRI\) and its attendant elite capture](#) — the People's Republic of China became a new reality for states that suddenly found themselves struggling to strike a balance between the opportunities offered by engagement with China on the one hand, and the corrosive effects upon democratic institutions stemming from that relationship, on the other. By the time the Taiwan-centric Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) [Tsai Ing-wen assumed office in May 2016](#), much of the international community had reached the realization that decades of engagement with China, including its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, had failed to transform the PRC into a country that respected democratic norms and international law. In fact, this engagement instead yielded a PRC that was more self-confident, increasingly assertive, and whose leadership was more willing to defy — and rewrite — international law and norms of conduct in ways that better suited its autocratic model of governance.

Taiwan's continued existence as a sovereign democratic entity stands in the way of Beijing's growing ambitions. Not only does Taiwan's vibrant democracy contradict the CCP's claim (and that of various intellectuals) that democracy is incompatible with Chinese civilization — thus denying the 1.3 billion Chinese the possibility of developing their country along such lines — but Taiwan's alignment with the U.S. and other democratic countries also threatens (or so Beijing claims) to contain China's expansionist ambitions. As if to underscore that point, Taiwan's location along the [first island chain linking Japan to Southeast Asia](#) is seen as an invisible line at sea that keeps China bottled up, impeding the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) ability to expand into the Western Pacific and beyond. Therefore, since 2016 conflict in the Taiwan Strait has increasingly assumed a more regional, if not global, status, with developments there potentially affecting the entire global economy as well as international politics.

While security analysts, government officials and civic groups have long emphasized the need to defend Taiwan against Chinese encroachment due to the island-nation's status as a democracy, Taiwan's role as the producer of a very substantial share — more than 90 percent — of the world's most-advanced semiconductors, and therefore the capital position it occupies in fueling the global economy in the age of artificial intelligence (AI), has gained currency in recent years.

(While national champions like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, or TSMC, became household names around the world, it is the ecosystem that has been created in Taiwan over decades of visionary hard work that has made possible this miracle, one that, furthermore, would be [nearly impossible to replicate elsewhere](#).) Moreover, more than C\$3.32 trillion in [cargo transits use the Taiwan Strait](#) annually, accounting for approximately one fifth of global maritime trade and 10 percent of global trade. Analyses estimate the [cost of war in the Taiwan Strait to the global economy](#) in the neighborhood of C\$13.86 trillion, or approximately 10 percent of the global GDP — a greater blow to the world economy than the Covid-19 pandemic, the global financial crisis and the Russian invasion of Ukraine *combined*. No country, therefore, can afford to ignore this potential chokepoint as they develop their national strategies.

More than ever, the international community has a stake in ensuring peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. None of this is purely altruistic. Politics never is. Instead, as Taiwan transforms into a frontline state in a new cold war, one that pits democracies against a number of authoritarian, revisionist powers led by Russia and China, Taipei has intensified its outreach to likeminded democracies around the world and expanded the scope and depth of the engagement it can accomplish with various countries despite the limitations imposed by their “one China” policy. During the Tsai years, Taiwan used quiet diplomacy, Track 1.5 exchanges, and other fora to deepen bilateral and multilateral ties, often sharing its substantial experience in countering PRC electoral interference, cognitive warfare, espionage, cyber warfare, “grey zone” operations and other forms of coercion with partners that were struggling to properly address the challenge of authoritarian influence in their own societies. During that time, foreign investment into Taiwan, accompanied by Taiwan’s outward investment, also flourished, creating new dependencies and further internationalizing the Taiwan “issue.” The greater the foreign presence in Taiwan, in the form of personnel, capital, investment, and real estate, and the greater the dependence on Taiwanese companies for global supply chains, the more difficult it became for Beijing to claim that Taiwan was an “internal issue,” one in which it would brook no “interference” from outside.

Seeking to counter the embrace of Taiwan by the international community, Beijing redoubled its efforts to snatch some of Taiwan’s official diplomatic allies and thereby further isolate the island-nation. During the eight years of the Tsai administration (2016-2024), the PRC succeeded in [poaching 11 of Taiwan’s diplomatic allies](#), bringing the number from 23 to 12. During that same period, China used its influence at the UN Security Council and UN General Assembly to deny Taiwan the ability to join multilateral organizations, even if only as an observer. Thus, despite the important role it plays in the global economy, Taiwan did not have a seat at organizations including Interpol, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Montreal-based International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), to name just a few. The dangerous blind spots that Taiwan’s continued exclusion engendered became all the more obvious in times of international crisis,

such as during the Covid-19 pandemic. No amount of publicity and appeals by Taiwan's diplomatic allies and some of the world's most powerful countries succeeded in overturning Beijing's political machinations at the UN.

Throughout the Tsai presidency, the CCP expanded its toolkit to interfere with Taiwan's democracy, its institutions and information environment, while redoubling its espionage efforts to steal government, military, and industrial secrets. The CCP also co-opted politicians, media moguls, religious figures, organized crime and businesspeople — often through financial incentives — to further penetrate Taiwan, weaponizing information to wage cognitive warfare on the people of Taiwan as well as Taiwan's allies overseas. This mechanism of co-optation, and the cultivation of local proxies, became a model which China replicated in countries worldwide to deepen its ability to shape the environment in its favor. Taiwan's ability to conjugate with this threat, and in adapting its national security laws to address this “grey zone” challenge, generated great interest worldwide as democracies sought to learn from Taiwan's experience so that they, too, could successfully adapt to, mitigate the effects of, and counter CCP interference. Many turned to Taiwan, for example, to learn from its government and civil society in how to counter CCP electoral interference.

In addition to “sharp power” instruments, Beijing also ramped up its “hard power” tools to tighten the coercive noose around Taiwan. Building on several years of double-digit investment in its military, China became increasingly willing to deploy the PLA around Taiwan, much as it did in other areas where it has territorial disputes with neighbors, such as the East and South China Sea. Gradually, Beijing increased its military presence around Taiwan and deployed a growing number of aircraft and navy vessels as part of exercises, all presented as “warnings” against Taiwan independence. Often, though not always, large-scale military exercises, and the propaganda campaigns that accompanied them, were time to coincide with announcements of major arms sales by the U.S. to Taiwan. Beijing used those to send signals to the international community that it would not countenance engagement with Taiwan, and hoped that the threatening posture would condition the Taiwanese public by reminding them of the military threat that existed on the other side of the Taiwan Strait.

Much as it did in the South China Sea, the PLA's incremental presence, along with that of the China Coast Guard (CCG), “maritime militia” and scientific vessels, constituted a strategy of incrementalism: with each little uptick, with each new fact on the ground or at sea, China was “boiling the frog” and creating a “new normal.” With growing frequency, PLA aircraft began crossing the tacit Davis, or median, line in the Taiwan Strait, which for decades had served as an unofficial boundary to avoid accidents involving military aircraft. More and more, Beijing deployed CCG vessels (China's coast guard differs markedly from the civilian coast guards as they are understood in the West, acting more as a paramilitary organization, or a “second navy”

ultimately under the command the Central Military Commission, headed by Xi Jinping) and ostensibly civilian vessels constituting a “maritime militia” to infiltrate the Taiwan Strait and waters surrounding Taiwan’s outlying islands of Kinmen and Matsu. China is seeking to overturn the international consensus that the Taiwan Strait constitutes an international waterway; instead, it aims to convince the international community that the Strait is China’s internal waters. Beijing has filed complaints whenever foreign navies — including Canada’s — have conducted right of passage transits in the Taiwan Strait, in recent years deploying the PLA to harass the transiting flotillas.

Having largely abandoned an incentives strategy (wining the “hearts and minds” of the Taiwanese has largely failed)¹ and relying mostly on coercion, the CCP was banking that, by 2020, the Taiwanese people would have been scared enough that they would elect a candidate in that year’s presidential election who was more amenable to resuming dialogue with Beijing. That is not what happened. Instead, in the wake of the crackdown in Hong Kong the year before, Tsai secured a resounding re-election with a record-breaking 8.17 million votes against her main opponent and Beijing’s favorite, the Kuomintang’s (KMT) Han Kuo-yu. The DPP also succeeded in retaining its majority of seats, albeit a slimmer one, in the Legislative Yuan. Muscle-flexing in the Taiwan Strait had failed to compel the Taiwanese to submit, just as PLA threat signals had failed to sway Taiwan’s first direct presidential election in 1996.

The outcome of the 2020 election did not deter Beijing, which further escalated with an even greater military presence, with almost daily passages by PLA aircraft and navy vessels. This escalation reached a new summit in August 2022 with the visit to Taiwan of the then-speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi. In what became the first of several large-scale, multi-day PLA live-fire exercises around Taiwan over the next three-plus years, the drills encircled Taiwan simulating a potential amphibious assault or blockade/quarantine, and featured the firing of a number of ballistic missiles. More than ever, Beijing was signaling to the international community that it would no longer accept the kind of engagement that Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan represented — even if it was not unprecedented, as then speaker of the House Newt Gingrich had done so 25 years prior. Beijing was moving the goal posts and writing new rules in an attempt

¹ An overwhelming majority of people in Taiwan support the “status quo,” or *de facto* independence, for the Republic of China (Taiwan). Support for unification with the PRC is in the low single-digits, and among those a substantial number insist that unification can only occur once the PRC has democratized. It is also important to note that both supporters of *de jure* independence for Taiwan (*taidu*) and those who support the continued existence of a sovereign Republic of China (*huadu*), Taiwan’s official name, agree in their opposition to being ruled by the PRC. Thus, one can simultaneously oppose a declaration of Taiwan independence (whereupon the ROC would cease to exist) and annexation by the PRC; in other words, opposition to Taiwan independence is not necessarily coterminous with support for unification with the PRC.

to further constrain Taiwan's ability to expand its outreach to the international community. Since August 2022, the PLA has held seven large-scale exercises around Taiwan, making them a new normal.

This growing military presence around Taiwan, with each new maneuver getting ever closer to Taiwan's 24 nautical mile territorial waters, increases the risks of accidents and miscommunication.² And with that, the possibility that escalation could result in major armed conflict, not by design, but rather by a series of moves and countermoves: sleepwalking into war, with untold consequences for the international community. We also cannot rule out the possibility of major armed conflict occurring by conscious decision by the CCP leadership. As Vladimir Putin's decision to invade Ukraine in 2022 has demonstrated, strong authoritarian leaders do not always weigh the costs and benefits of drastic action in the way that leadership in democracies tend to do. For them, regime survival, hubris, ideology and a desire to "move history," added to their tendency to ignore advice from the specialists around them (or their receiving advice from sycophants who are wary of contradicting the strong leader) will sometimes outweigh the expected costs of adventurism. Thus, while there is no guarantee that Xi Jinping will follow in his ally Putin's footsteps and initiate a war against Taiwan, that prospect cannot be ruled out altogether. Nor, for that matter, does Xi need the precedent set by Putin to propel his country on a similar course.

What has prevented (so far) Beijing from choosing the military option to resolve the "Taiwan question," as the conflict is often described, is deterrence: the perception by the leadership in Beijing that the potential costs of attempting an annexation of Taiwan by force would be too high, and too destabilizing to the CCP regime, whose chief consideration remains the ability to remain in power. There is no knowing what a failed attempt to invade Taiwan, or one that comes at too high a cost materially and in terms of casualties, would do to the Chinese people's support for the CCP, especially as recent polling in the country shows that the majority of Chinese people are comfortable with the status quo and not highly supportive of their government resorting to force to annex Taiwan.

Deterrence against a PLA attack stems from a combination of factors: Taiwan's resolve and means to counter a PLA incursion, with promises of high casualty rates on the invader's side; and the calculation that the U.S. military would join the fight on Taiwan's side, perhaps with the assistance of other countries such as Japan and a handful of other allies. Continued U.S. arms

² The number of Chinese ships detected around Taiwan proper (excluding its outlying islands) soared to a record 244 in July 2026, an average of nearly eight every day. This number does not include PLA Navy deployments in the area. Between May 2026 and the writing of this paper in September 2026, more than 1,300 Chinese vessels were operating around Taiwan proper and its outlying islands.

sales to Taiwan also plays a major role in maintaining deterrence. Strong signals of support by the international community, underscored by statements by the [G7](#) and [NATO](#), among others, along with freedom of navigation transits in the Taiwan Strait and alliance-led military exercises in preparation for regional contingencies, all play an important role in influencing how Beijing calculates the likelihood of success in an invasion of Taiwan. The same holds for a naval blockade or quarantine, which, given that such a gambit would not occur in a vacuum and would inevitably destabilize the global economy, could also prompt countervailing moves by the U.S. and other regional powers.

The longstanding policy of the U.S. when it comes to a potential involvement in a Taiwan Strait scenario is one of [“strategic ambiguity,”](#) where Washington does not clearly declare whether, and if so, how, it would join the conflict to counter the PLA. In other words, the strategy aims to keep the Chinese leadership guessing. So far, notwithstanding Beijing’s bluster, this strategy has worked, and Beijing has not attacked Taiwan. But that calculus could be changing, which is why some experts have advocated for the U.S. to abandon its strategy of ambiguity in favor of clearer signaling that any attempt to seize Taiwan by force would compel a U.S. intervention (former president Joe Biden [made a handful of references](#) to such clarity during his presidency, only for the U.S. Department of State to walk those statements back, which suggests that U.S. policy on the matter had not changed).

Two other variables are also bound to influence the Chinese leadership’s views regarding the viability of a military option for Taiwan. The first is the perception of U.S. support for Taiwan, which comes from an analysis of the signals emanating from the White House, U.S. Congress and other pillars of U.S. foreign policy. Is the American administration clearly stating its continued support for Taiwan, through policies and arms sales? Or, conversely, is it moving towards isolationism, transactionalism, or distracted and overwhelmed by major contingencies elsewhere? The second variable is the status of the PLA itself and assessments by the Chinese leadership that the Chinese military is sufficiently equipped and trained to risk a large-scale military operation against Taiwan. In other words, does the PLA have the *capabilities* to match *intent*? For decades, the CCP signaled its intent to use force against Taiwan, yet never acted on that threat in large part because the Chinese military was unprepared and ill-equipped to act upon such an order. A few years ago Xi ordered the PLA to have the means to invade Taiwan by 2027 if so ordered (the so-called [“Davidson Window,”](#) stemming from remarks made by retired admiral Philip S. Davidson of the U.S. Navy). This directive has often been misinterpreted by security analysts and media outlets as constituting a deadline — in other words, confirmation that China *would* use force against Taiwan in 2027. No such directive has ever been given by the Chinese leadership, and [recent crackdowns on corruption within the PLA](#), along with technological challenges within China’s defense industry, indicate that a 2027 deadline for

readiness may be too premature. This may buy Taiwan and its allies some time, but one thing is certain: after several years of heavy investment in the military, China's PLA is both quantitatively and qualitatively in a much better position to flex its muscles than it was just a decade ago.

Survival in uncertain times: Chinese assertiveness and Trump 2.0

Taiwan is now facing a new era of high uncertainty. Since May 2024 it has a new president, [the DPP's William Lai Ching-te](#), who succeeded Tsai after two terms in office (under the ROC constitution a president is limited to two consecutive terms). Seen as a more vocal and combative advocate of an independent Taiwan than his more cautious predecessor, Lai faces strong opposition in parliament, where the DPP lost its majority of seats in the 2024 elections, held concurrently with the election that brought him to power. Led by the KMT and the smaller Taiwan People's Party (TPP), the opposition has used its newfound powers to destabilize the central government's budget, water down national security laws adopted during the Tsai administration amid escalating interference by the CCP, and [dilute a NT\\$1.25 trillion \(C\\$54.8 billion\) special defense budget](#) meant to increase Taiwan's ability to deter an attack by China. Opposition lawmakers have also undermined efforts by the administration to [procure and develop large numbers of unmanned vehicles](#). Although some opposition figures in the Legislative Yuan, Taiwan's parliament, may be acting on bad faith or as proxies of China, most are not and are ostensibly only toeing party directives and justifying their actions as politics-as-usual in a highly polarized polity. And yet, whatever their motives, this mix of *disloyal* and *semi-loyal* opposition has the same impact: a country that is seemingly split in the middle, disunited, and struggling to come together to defend itself against external aggression. Sustained over a long period, such disunity also risks sending the wrong signal to Taiwan's allies, chief among them the U.S., whose current administration is closely watching to determine whether its partners — particularly countries that depend on the U.S. for their security — are serious and committed enough to ensuring their own national defense (President Lai's special defense budget aims, among other things, to [bring Taiwan's defense spending to 5 percent of GDP](#), regarded as the “minimum” expenditure expected by Trump administration officials). China has seized upon this disunity to markedly increase its military and “grey zone” activity around Taiwan.

The second source of uncertainty confronting Taiwan is the nature of the current government in Washington. Although the first Trump administration was, on the whole, beneficial to Taiwan and led to unprecedented engagement by the two sides (most of which continued under the Biden administration), Trump 2.0 is a different beast altogether. For one thing, the Trump administration's ostensible turn against democracy and liberalism puts Taiwan in a difficult position, as much of the narrative around the need to defend Taiwan has historically centered on the fact that it is a fellow democracy. Thus, in order to gain traction with the unpredictable Trump administration and maintain its value to the U.S., Taipei has had to shift its emphasis to other areas. Semiconductors, and the multibillion-dollar investments that Taiwanese firms like TSMC

have made in the U.S., is one area that has given Taiwan leverage, as is the role that Taiwan can play in maintaining peace and stability in the region, chiefly within the first island chain.

And yet, Taiwan's ability to influence decision makers in Washington — and President Trump himself more specifically — is somewhat limited. Trump 2.0 is more unpredictable, more transactional, and much less constrained by international laws and longstanding rules of international politics. Furthermore, President Trump seems to have suggested that he would be amenable to great powers enjoying greater freedom within their rightful “spheres of influence” — a division of parts of the world in which smaller powers would have little, if any, say as regards their destiny. With Trump ostensibly focusing on securing the Western Hemisphere, it is not impossible that, as part of a grand bargain, Washington could decide to abandon other parts of the world to great powers such as Russia and China. Such a future is by no means predetermined, and President Trump has demonstrated time and again that he could change his mind. (All eyes, therefore, are on his upcoming meeting with Xi Jinping in Beijing in September.) But the prospect of such abandonment is a scenario that is of great concern in Taipei, Tokyo, Manila and Seoul, as it exposes them to the possibility that they may one day have to face the regional hegemon, China, on their own, without the expectations of a U.S. security umbrella. Such a prospect should not be taken lightly, or regarded as the whim of a single unusual leader: it taps into growing fatigue within the American public and the perception, right or wrong, that the West (and some allies in Asia) has been “free-riding” on U.S. largesse since the end of World War II. U.S. Congress remains a staunch ally of Taiwan, but the Trump administration's ongoing efforts to give the executive branch unprecedented — and seemingly unchecked — powers means that Congress' ability to influence policy making on matters of war and peace may become more constrained. Generational change in both the Republican and Democrat parties also raises uncertainty about continued commitment to Taiwan as new congressmen and -women may have other priorities.

All this happens amid signs that revisionist, authoritarian regimes led by Moscow and Beijing are working more closely together to challenge the world order and overstretch the U.S.-led military alliance (an alliance that furthermore is itself under assault by the Trump administration). China and Russia may be aiming to distract and overwhelm the U.S., or security alliances such as NATO, by sparking various contingencies simultaneously, which could weaken the alliance's ability to respond. For example, Russia and China appear to be deepening their military cooperation in Northeast Asia, with North Korea acting as a force multiplier to complicate the ability of the U.S., Japan and possibly South Korea to respond to a Taiwan contingency. China has been supplying Russia's arms industry to sustain its war against Ukraine, while North Korea has provided matériel and soldiers to the Russian army. Taiwan and its allies must therefore pay close attention to developments around the world that risk sapping resources that are usually deployed in the Indo-Pacific, as this would reduce the alliance's ability to sustain deterrence against the PLA. A series of major contingencies in Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, or in Asia, especially if those

were to occur simultaneously, could open a window of opportunity for China to use force against Taiwan. Already, the U.S.-Israel war against Iran has forced the U.S. military to shift capabilities in the Indo-Pacific theater to the Middle East.

Canada's options: Preparedness, multilateralism, and deterrence

Taiwan is Canada's 15th-largest trading partner globally and its sixth-largest in the Indo-Pacific region. Overall two-way trade is estimated at C\$6 billion. Taiwan is the world's 21st largest economy by nominal GDP, and its stock market is now the world's fifth-largest. Such figures, however, do not provide the full picture of Canada's exposure to the Taiwan "chokepoint." Like the rest of the world, the Canadian economy is highly reliant on the maritime trade that passes through the Taiwan Strait as well as to the advanced semiconductors and adjacent industries that center around Taiwan. Consequently, Ottawa's Indo-Pacific Strategy cannot afford to remain complacent over Taiwan.

Along with other partners, Canada must develop the wherewithal and policies that will prepare it to address various contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, among them a maritime quarantine/blockade of Taiwan — the likelier scenarios at this point and which the PLA and CCG have been rehearsing in recent years — as well as major armed conflict such as an invasion of Taiwan, decapitation strikes, or limited military operations. This policy toolkit must include the means by which to monitor indicators of a coming crisis as well as the necessary responses to mitigate the detrimental effects of a contingency on the Canadian economy and its national security (rerouting cargo, insurance, evacuation of up to 60,000 Canadian citizens, and so on). It needs the analysis capacity to identify escalation pathways, the potential duration of a quarantine/blockade, the areas of Canada's economy that would be most affected by such scenarios, while identifying the gaps in its current diplomatic and security capabilities deployed to the region.

None of this need violate Ottawa's "one China" policy,³ although such an exercise should nevertheless identify the potential for retaliation by Beijing in response to Canada's position in a crisis. Cognizant of its limited resources in the region, it is also clear that Canada would benefit greatly from playing a role within a multilateral context, one that furthermore should assume a permanent, rather than ad hoc or reactive form. Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy should also aim to increase Canada's role in conflict prevention and deterrence in the Taiwan Strait and the wider region by signaling to Beijing that any adventurism and attempt to change the status quo by force would trigger a countervailing response by a coalition of large economies (e.g., the G7). Moreover, Canada, along with likeminded allies, should be willing to make greater investments,

³ Not to be confused with Beijing's "one China" principle.

diplomatic *and* military, and to increase their presence in the region in response to growing doubts about the continuation of U.S. commitments as a guarantor of stability in the Indo-Pacific. Even if a withdrawal were theoretical and did not materialize, the alliance would benefit from increased capacity in the region.

Ottawa's strategy must also account for the fact that the annexation of Taiwan by the PRC, especially if it were accomplished by force and coercion, would inevitably engender a less predictable and more hostile geopolitical environment. Abandoning Taiwan to its fate would send the wrong signal to revisionist powers by encouraging the perception that the community of democracies is unable, or unwilling, to hold the line. Countries like Russia would feel emboldened and could conclude that expansionism in other corners of the world — NATO allies in Europe or in the Arctic — would also go unchallenged. Given this, Canada has every advantage in ensuring that it, along with its allies do what is necessary to maintain the global status quo while continuing to strengthen their democratic institutions against foreign authoritarian interference, an area where Canada can learn precious lessons from Taiwan's own experience.

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