Taiwan’s role in the Indo-Pacific: From an Indo-Pacific actor to an Indo-Pacific maker?

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No matter if we agree or not with the controversial cover story of *the Economist* describing Taiwan as “the most dangerous place on Earth”, it is certain that Taiwan is one of the likeliest flashpoints in the world. The unsolved conflict started in 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party were defeated by the Communist Party, leading to his escape to Taiwan, accompanied by a million mainland Chinese. From that moment on, the “reunification” goal became a vital interest for the PRC. The 1954-1955, 1958 and 1995-1996 cross-strait crises, in which the United States intervened alongside the Taiwanese military, were followed by a period of constant tension with political, military and cultural components. Yet, the year 2020, because of the Covid-19 pandemic and its geopolitical consequences, have witnessed a strengthening of these antagonisms, symbolized by an increasing number of PLA aircrafts incursions into the Taiwanese ADIZ. The invasion of Ukraine by Russia is also raising concerns about a similar move from China towards Taiwan, even though the two situations have very distinct features and stakes. This paper will not come back on the Strait’s tensions. Instead, it will focus on the link between Taiwan and the formulation of Indo-Pacific strategies. First, it will try to analyze the change of discourse about Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait in Indo-Pacific strategies and statements from Indo-Pacific actors. The first part shows that the Taiwan’s question is mostly raised by Western actors of the region and that the inclusion of Taiwan in foreign countries security priorities can be expressed through different manners but lack some concrete actions. Second, it will describe Taiwan’s current stance regarding the Indo-Pacific concept to know where it stands in its own formulation of an Indo-Pacific strategy. This second part argues that if Taiwan has not an Indo-Pacific strategy per se, it has established a strategy for the region, the Indo-Pacific concept being widely adopted by Taiwan’s Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as Taiwan’s led track 1.5, track 2 platforms. Third, it will analyze the main tools for Taiwan to implement this Indo-Pacific concept, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. The last part analyzes Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy (NSP) and its ‘Austronesian diplomacy’, the too main tools for giving substance to its Indo-Pacific strategy that suffer mainly from Taiwan’s diplomatic isolation, Taiwan lacking the hard power to implement its ambition of rapprochement with various partners in the region.

Taiwan: a geopolitical hotspot in the Indo-Pacific getting an increasing visibility among Indo-Pacific actors?

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1 See M. Lefèvre, “Ukraine/Taiwan, to compare or not to compare? That is the question”, *Asia Centre*, 1 March 2022.
Taiwan and foreign Indo-Pacific strategies

Sounding like a paradox, the word “Taiwan” is absent from most of the Indo-Pacific strategies documents which have been published so far (see Annex I). Lots of countries involved in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean have kept silent (ASEAN, India, Netherlands, the UK) on that issue or mention it very lightly and implicitly. Without surprise, the United States and Japan take a stronger stance. Already under the Trump administration, the 2019 DoD report was designing for the first time Taiwan as a “country” with which the US wants to strengthen its partnership. It highlighted the importance to create interstate networks in the Indo-Pacific and to “facilitate increased Taiwanese access to international spaces and to urge other nations to more closely network with Taiwan in those spaces”. The US new Indo-Pacific Strategy published on February 2022 is describing Taiwan as one of the US “leading regional partners”, and reassuring the American commitment to support Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities under TRA, the Six Assurances and the Three Joint Communiqués. The US Indo-Pacific Strategy is even advocating for a future “determined peacefully in accordance with the wishes and best interests of Taiwan’s people”. In a more factual manner, Japan is also mentioning Taiwan in its 2021 Defense white paper (but not in its Indo-Pacific strategy fact sheets). Yet, this report is framing for the first time that “stabilizing the situation surrounding Taiwan is important for Japan’s security and the stability of the international community. Therefore, it is necessary that we pay close attention to the situation with a sense of crisis more than ever before”. Eventually, the 2022 updated version of the French Indo-Pacific strategy (from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) is using as stronger language regarding Taiwan in comparison to the previous version: the tensions in the Taiwan Strait are mentioned for the first time and Taiwan is described as a key partner in terms of supply chains. The recently published EU Indo-Pacific strategy is also highlighting the key role Taiwan plays in terms of semiconductors manufacturing, data protection and the need to foster trade and investment relations between the EU and Taiwan.

3 The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) is an act of the United States Congress passed in 1979 that defines the relationship between the United States and Taiwan after China’s recognition. Among other things, it authorizes the sale of weapons for defensive purposes to Taiwan.
4 The Six Assurances are six key U.S. foreign policy principles regarding U.S.-Taiwan relations and were adopted to clarify the third PRC-U.S. communiqué issued in 1982. The latter provided for a gradual reduction in arms sales to Taiwan conditioned on PRC commitments to the pacification of the cross-strait conflict. The Six Assurances are among the semi-formal guidelines used in the conduct of U.S.-Taiwan relations, with the formal content adopted in 2016 by the U.S. House of Representatives in a non-binding resolution. The Six Assurances are 1) The United States has not agreed to set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan 2) The United States has not agreed to consult with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan 3) The United States will not mediate between Taipei and Beijing 4) The United States has not agreed to revise the TRA 5) The United States has not changed its position on sovereignty over Taiwan 6) The United States will not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the PRC.
5 Three joint statements between the PRC and the US in which the United States « acknowledged that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China » and declared its intent to continue selling arms to Taiwan.
Taiwan and speeches, joint declarations, or other areas of discussions

Regarding Taiwan-China relations, if some dates can be identified as milestones to explain an increase of tensions between the two parties (2016: the victory of DPP under Tsai Ing-wen; 2018: the beginning of the Sino-US commercial/geopolitical war under Trump administration and its implications on US-China-Taiwan triangle; 2019: the speech on October of Xi Jinping announcing that the “reunification” with Taiwan should not be the affair of the next Chinese generation, etc.), there is without doubt an ante and post pandemic situation. The pandemic has acted as a catalyst of already existing geopolitical tensions, resulting in China being more assertive and aggressive, and especially against Taiwan, with gray zone tactics, including an increasing number of Chinese aircrafts penetrating Taiwan’s ADIZ. Therefore, it is mainly from 2020 that the declarations and other actions of Indo-Pacific actors became clearer and more committed to Taiwan, or at least to the preservation of the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

✧ Official declarations: national, bilateral and multilateral breakthroughs internationalizing the attention over Taiwan

First, various statements from the Biden administration questioned the “strategic ambiguity” of the US: the Biden administration’s commitment to Taiwan’s security is increasingly clear, according to Zhong Zhidong7. On October 2021, Joe Biden gave an interview to CNN in which he stated that the US would defend Taiwan if China invaded. During the 2021 East Asia Summit, he also highlighted the fact that the US had a “rock-solid” commitment to Taiwan8. More recently, during his visit to Japan on May 2022, Joe Biden stated very clearly that the US were committed to defend Taiwan in case of a Chinese invasion, adding that “America is committed to a one-China policy but that does not mean China has the jurisdiction to use force to take Taiwan”. It becomes less and less credible to attribute these statements to a repetition of verbal blunders, as Biden’s administration would have us believe. Indeed, other observers argue that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, rules are not the same anymore, and that Biden’s statement was a logical adaptation to History’s evolution9.

Following the American move, Japan was among the US partners to take a stronger stance. For instance, in mid-March 2021, during the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee (a 2+2 meeting), the Ministers put emphasis on the “importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait”10. The same message was expressed in mid-April 2021, during the Japan-US Summit Meeting between Joe Biden and Yoshihide Suga. Showing

7 Z. Zhong (鍾志東), 美國支持台灣「有意義參與」聯合國對台灣安全的影響, INDSR, 12 November 2021.
8 Ibid.
an evolution, it was the “first mention of Taiwan in a US-Japan joint statement since 1969”\(^\text{11}\). Political figures like Yasuhide Nakayama or Taro Aso spoke more bluntly about the ‘defense of Taiwan’. A rhetorical shift which can be understood as Japan’s concerns over protecting Okinawa and the implications an involvement of the US in a conflict against China could have on US troops stationed in Japan and Japan’s territory itself (which is already threatened by Chinese air and naval incursions and the tensions over Senkaku/Diaoyu islands). For instance, on June 28\(^\text{th}\), Yasuhide Nakayama, Japanese Deputy Defense Minister, “said it was time to ‘wake up’ to China’s growing threats to the region and ‘to protect Taiwan as a democratic country’”\(^\text{12}\). He described Taiwan as a “brother”, a “family”. On June 2021, in an interview given to Bloomberg News, Nobuo Kishi, Japan’s Defense Minister, said that the security of Taiwan was directly linked with that of Japan. On July 2021, during a debate in the upper house, Taro Aso, Japan’s Deputy Prime Minister within the Suga administration, assured that “if a major incident were to occur against Taiwan, it can be said that it would be related to a situation threatening Japan’s survival. If that were the case, Japan and the United States would have to defend Taiwan together”. Saying that “if Taiwan falls, Okinawa is next”, Taro Aso is sharing the concern of other Japanese high political figures who think that Taiwan’s territorial integrity is connected to the protection of the South of Japan, and more particularly Okinawa. Besides, during the 2021 online meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue between Taiwan, Japan and the US (mainly with lawmakers), Shinzo Abe (who left his office at that time) did not hesitate to say that “what happened in Hong Kong must never happen in Taiwan”\(^\text{13}\). Eventually, on August 2021, the ruling parties of Japan and Taiwan held bilateral talks on security issues for the first time\(^\text{14}\).

The US-ROK Leader’s Joint Statement\(^\text{15}\) during the summit in May 2021 was also the first joint statement ever made by Seoul and Washington mentioning Taiwan. And during the press conference, “Moon reiterated that South Korea would work more closely with Washington on this issue”\(^\text{16}\). Yet, South Korean position regarding Taiwan, even if sharing the same issue as Japan with US troops on its soil, has always been more nuanced in comparison to Tokyo, as it does not want to alienate China, an important partner for economic and geopolitical reasons. The 2021 AUSMIN joint statement (2+2 meeting between the US and Australia), in comparison to the one of 2020, was also more explicit in terms of support for Taiwan. The 2020 joint statement mentioned Taiwan for the first time, but the one of 2021 went further. It went from the intent to

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\(^{11}\) J. Chang, “Japan’s Policy Shift on Taiwan Centers on Okinawa”, The Global Taiwan Brief, Vol. 6, Issue 16, Global Taiwan Institute, 11 August 2021.

\(^{12}\) J. Chang, “Japan’s Policy Shift on Taiwan Centers on Okinawa”, The Global Taiwan Brief, Vol. 6, Issue 16, Global Taiwan Institute, 11 August 2021.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) C. Wang, S. Ellis, “Japan and Taiwan ruling parties to hold security talks Friday”, The Japan Times, 25 August 2021


\(^{16}\) S. Cho, “South Korea’s Taiwan conundrum”, War on the Rocks, 31 December 2021
“maintain strong unofficial ties with Taiwan”\(^{17}\) to the intent to “strengthen ties with Taiwan, which is a leading democracy and a critical partner for both countries”\(^ {18}\), showing an important rhetorical shift, especially with the disappearance of the “unofficial” term. In August 2021, during France-Australia 2+2 talks, both sides underscored the importance of peace and stability across the Strait and a peaceful resolution of this issue. In January 2022, France-Japan 2+2 meeting adopted the same language.

At a broader scale (the EU and the G7), a similar shift was observed. On June 2021, the US-EU Summit joint statement also included this new type of language. Similarly, the G7 2021 joint communique mentioned for the first time “the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait”\(^ {19}\), encouraging “the peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues”\(^ {20}\). More recently, the EU-US Dialogue on China, held in Brussels on April 2022, “included a detailed discussion about Taiwan. [...] Last year, [a] diplomat noted, the EU pushed back against Taiwan being put on the agenda (though it did get a mention in the joint statement). This year, it was the EU that proposed Taiwan as a main agenda item. [...] Both sides see 2024, when the United States and Taiwan hold presidential elections, as a potential danger point.”\(^ {21}\)

Interestingly, the “more frequently that Taiwan-related language appears in these summits, the easier it will be for the Biden administration to encourage countries to include it in joint statements. The more countries that express explicit support for ‘peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait’, the harder it will be for Beijing to focus its ire on just one. There is strength in unity of this language inclusion.”\(^ {22}\)

Besides, if India is considered by some observers as being the “missing link in the QUAD”\(^ {23}\) and “steered clear of issuing any statement on Taiwan”\(^ {24}\), when the escalations in Ladakh started, two MPs from BJP virtually attended the swearing ceremony of Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen. And in July 2020, a high-ranking diplomat from the Ministry of External Affairs was appointed to be the next Representative to Taiwan to boost India-Taiwan relationship in the backdrop of increasing Indian-Chinese tensions.

\[\text{Parliaments’ support}\]

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\(^ {19}\) “Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué”, Consilium Europa, June 2021.

\(^ {20}\) Ibid.


\(^ {22}\) T.J. Shattuck, “A Sea Change Brewing over the Taiwan Strait?”, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 8 July 2021.

\(^ {23}\) S. Hashmi, “A Missing Link in the QUAD: India’s Support for Taiwan”, The Diplomat, 19 July 2021.

\(^ {24}\) Ibid.
Besides, the stronger support for Taiwan and the linkage made between Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific’s stability is also found in resolutions voted by Parliaments of different countries. For instance, On November 2021, the French National Assembly adopted a resolution to support Taiwan’s participation in international organizations. Parliaments from other countries voted such resolutions, such as Italy with the Foreign Affairs Committee calling for strengthening cooperation with “democratic partners in the Indo-Pacific”. Parliamentarian delegations from different countries (Czech Republic in September 2020, France in October 2021, the Baltic States in November 2021) also visited Taiwan and addressed significant messages. On June 2021, the Canadian House of Commons passed the first reading of an Act for establishing a framework in order to strengthen Canada-Taiwan relations, stating that Canada “consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, or by boycotts or embargoes, to be a threat to the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific region and of grave concern to Canada”, and supporting Taiwan’s participation in different international organizations, “so that Taiwan may play a role that is commensurate with its position in the Indo-Pacific region”. On June 2021, legislators from Japan’s LDP called for a new law similar to the TRA in the US. On November 2, 2021, the European Parliament sent an official delegation to Taiwan for the first time, following the unprecedented publication on October 2021 of a document defining political relations between the EU and Taiwan. More recently, a European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs report regarding the security challenges the EU faces in the Indo-Pacific was adopted in June 2022 and designed Taiwan as a “key partner and democratic ally in the region”. It was the 5th report in favor to Taiwan adopted by the European Parliament in the year 2022, the European institution calling for Taiwan’s participation to international organizations.

✧ Concrete actions

Therefore, 2021 was the year of many unprecedented statements regarding Taiwan and its importance for the stability of the region, reflecting the increasing concerns regarding the tensions surrounding the Taiwan Strait, and more particularly by Indo-Pacific countries who could find themselves involved in a conflict. The 2021 Defense report of Taiwan stated that “it has become an international consensus to maintain the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and consequently, every country is keeping a close eye on

25 “MOFA thanks French National Assembly for adopting first-ever resolution supporting Taiwan’s participation in international organizations”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan) Department of European Affairs, 30 November 2021.
26 “An Act respecting a framework to strengthen Canada-Taiwan relations”, House of Commons of Canada, Bill C-315 (First Reading), 17 June 2021.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
30 “EU committee adopts Indo-Pacific report affirming Taiwan ties”, Focus Taiwan, 23 March 2022.
the development of security situations in the Strait.”

Yet, the question is whether this increasing attention and this rhetorical shift is traduced into concrete policies. For instance, some of Indo-Pacific actors who made stronger declarations in favor of Taiwan are still very cautious in terms of rapprochement with Taipei as they do not want to openly confront China. It was the case with Abe’s government refusing the proposals from Tsai Ing-wen to hold a Japan-Taiwan Security Dialogue as well as bilateral talks between Japanese and Taiwanese officials. On the contrary, in accordance with the TRA and the Six Assurances, the US continues to sale military equipment and promote defense cooperation (on October 2021, Tsai Ing-wen confirmed for the first time the presence of American soldiers on Taiwanese soil to train Taiwanese troops) to help Taiwan strengthening its defensive power, and the Congress has proposed different bills in favor of Taiwan. Other measures allowing exchanges between officials started to be taken under Donald Trump and keep going under the Biden’s administration. Besides, US Navy ships are routinely sailing through the Taiwan Strait within the framework of FONOPS. 9 declared US transits through the Strait occurred in 2019, 15 in 2020, 12 in 2021 and so far, 4 have happened since the beginning of 2022, the last one occurring at the end of April 2022. More interestingly, an increasing number of US partners have also transited the Taiwan Strait (the UK, France, Canada and Australia). If transits through the Strait in the name of the freedom of navigation are the most obvious signs of implicit support given to Taiwan, other joint military exercises around Taiwanese waters are also signaling to Beijing: On 25 September 2021, one day after the QUAD meeting, the US, UK and Australia forces have done different maneuvers around strategic points in East and South China Sea in case of a conflict between China and Taiwan. Similarly, if the newly formed AUKUS security partnership is neither mentioning China nor Taiwan, its goals in terms of capabilities sharing are mainly about deterring Chinese aggressions in the Indo-Pacific and preparing for a future conflict in its different dimensions. Taken together, these transits through the Strait, joint-military exercises – of which intensity and number of involved partners

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32 For instance, in coherence with 2019 US FOIP stating that Taiwan should get more support in the international space, in 2020, Alex Azar, US Health and Human Services Secretary, and Keith J. Krach, Under Secretary of State, came to Taiwan and it was the first visit by the most senior US administration officials to Taiwan since the breakdown of diplomatic relations in 1979. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo lifted all bans on official visits to the US by political figures from Taiwan. Therefore, Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan’s representative to the US attended the inauguration of Joe Biden (a first since 1979). Again, Hsiao Bi-khim and Audrey Tang, Digital Minister, were invited to represent Taiwan at the Summit for Democracy in December 2021.
33 Database established by Collin Koh, a research fellow at Singapore’s S Rajaratnam School of International Studies. (Source: “US warship transits Taiwan Strait”, Taipei Times, 27 February 2022)
34 The carrier group organized around the British aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth departed from Guam and transited through the Bashi Channel, located South of Taiwan and North of the Philippines. The American carrier group organized around the USS Ronald Reagan entered the South China Sea from the South, via the Strait of Malacca, and the carrier group led by the USS Carl Vinson approached in the same direction from the North, from the Okinawa Islands. Finally, the Royal Australian Navy’s helicopter landing dock HMAS Canberra was leaving Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and entering the sea in a southwest direction.
are increasing – in the surrounding waters and the newly formed Alliance are all signals to deter China from invading Taiwan, expressing a support for Taipei in a subtler way than official declarations.

Besides, the inclusion of Taiwan into the Indo-Pacific strategies of different actors and the resulting rapprochement with the island are not only limited to the military domain: the economic dimension matters too. It was shown by Joe Biden who launched the *Indo-Pacific Economic Framework* (IPEF) as an alternative to the *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership* (RCEP). The IPEF, in which 13 countries (and among them 11 belonging to the RCEP) have expressed their interest, is a strategy adopted by the US government to enhance its economic engagement in the Asia-Pacific, following the US withdrawal from the TPP in 2017. Xu Liping, director of Southeast Asia studies center within the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, considers that some elements of the IPEF are specifically designed to exclude China, showing its geopolitical dimension: standards for digital trade, rules on labour condition and environmental practices, and restructuration of supply chains with a repatriation of activities or their delocalization in other ‘friend countries’ (*friend shoring*). If Taiwan has been left aside from this project, on June 1, 2022, the US and Taiwan unveiled a new trade initiative – The US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade – marking the launch of official trade negotiations between the two parties for an FTA. On June 2, 2022, during a visit to Taipei by US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Washington also launched an economic dialogue, including in particular the issue of semiconductors. In a similar manner, the Indo-Pacific strategies or defence papers from various countries (France, Australia, the US and the EU, for instance) are putting emphasis on Taiwan as an economic partner and a key player within the semiconductor supply chain: thus, on June 2, 2022, the first ministerial-level talks between the EU Director-General for Trade Sabine Weyand and Taiwan’s Minister of Economic Affairs Wang Mei-hua was organized, and Taiwan and the EU agreed to “collaborate on enhancing semiconductor supply chain resilience by boosting bilateral trade and investment, and deepening research-and-development efforts.” These two examples show to what extent an economic rapprochement with Taiwan is an integral part of geopolitical strategies and increases the cost of a military invasion by Beijing, which would be more severely punished by attacking an economic partner of different Indo-Pacific actors.

To conclude, Taiwan is increasingly attracting the attention of some Indo-Pacific countries, translated either into their official strategy papers, or via different ways of expression – joint statements, speeches, Parliaments resolutions and visits, military maneuvers, economic rapprochement, etc. Yet, if Taiwan matters for the Indo-Pacific and the countries involved in this region, it is now time to see if and how the Indo-Pacific matters for Taiwan.

35 See D. Cheng, “China is not worried about the IPEF – but it should be”, *The Straits Times*, 30 May 2022.
36 L. Wang, “Taiwan, EU to enhance chip supply resilience”, *Taipei Times*, 3 June 2022.
Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific: quid of a domestic strategy

An official Indo-Pacific strategy yet to come but an Indo-Pacific concept already adopted by the Taiwanese government

Taiwan did not publish an official Indo-Pacific strategy. But it does not mean that Taiwan does not have a strategy in the Indo-Pacific. In 2017, the Indo-Pacific concept appeared for the first time in the national defense report (see Annex II) published by the MoD. In the 2019 national defense report, the Indo-Pacific is defined as a zone which “covers a vast area in between the Pacific Ocean and west coast of India and its neighbouring countries”\(^{37}\) In the most recent national defense report (published in October 2021), the “Indo-Pacific” word is mentioned 47 times and two sub-chapters are specifically dedicated to it, called “Trends in the Indo-Pacific security environment” and “Defense Policies of States in the Indo-Pacific”. In the chapter I about Taiwan’s regional posture in the Indo-Pacific, the report highlights the fact that Taiwan can “make contributions to protecting collective security interests and prosperity”\(^{38}\) in the region. Interestingly, while other countries in their Indo-Pacific strategies both explain why the Indo-Pacific matters to them and why they are relevant as an Indo-Pacific country, the national defense report is essentially highlighting the fact that Taiwan matters for the Indo-Pacific. Taiwan is “located at a key node of strategic importance on the first island chain of the Indo-Pacific, linking sea lines of communication (SLOCs) between the Western Pacific, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean”. “The Bashi Channel in its south and the Miyako Strait in its north are major waterways for the PRC to access to the island chains. Any changes to the situation in the Taiwan Strait will affect the security of international communication and the economic development of the region”\(^{39}\). Then, the report elaborates on what Taiwan can bring to Indo-Pacific partners as Taiwan is “keenly working with like-minded nations by leveraging [its] geo-strategic importance and sturdy insistence on the values of freedom and democracy to jointly maintain regional peace and stability”\(^{40}\). In comparison to the 2019 report, more emphasis is put on the role Taiwan can play in terms of security with two new elements in its presentation as “a key player to regional peace and stability”\(^{41}\): Taiwan is 1) an “important partner in the Indo-Pacific strategy”\(^{42}\) and 2) “assuring stability surrounding the Taiwan Strait”\(^{43}\) as “the ROC Armed Forces continue monitoring PRC’s military activities and movements at all times, sustaining a robust defense power to maintain the security in the surrounding areas of the Taiwan Strait and free passage of both air and sea lines of communication, and working as the peacekeepers in the Indo-Pacific to

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\(^{39}\) Ibid.
\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Ibid.
\(^{42}\) Ibid.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
contribute substantially to the security and stability in the region.”

It puts emphasis on the democratic system of Taiwan, its strong and dynamic economy, its capacities in terms of information technology (with its semiconductor industries playing an important role in the global supply chain as well as its capacities in cyber-defense) and experiences in humanitarian assistance and disaster response (notably to face non-conventional security issues, such as diseases, natural disasters, and terrorism, this last part echoing the ASEAN and EU emphasis on ‘nontraditional security’ in their respective Indo-Pacific strategies). Therefore, the report is implicitly advocating for the coherence between Taiwan and the US/Japan FOIP strategy: 1) the respect of the sovereignty and independence of all nations echoing Taiwan’s will to self-rule and be protected from a Chinese invasion 2) the democratic and liberal values shared by Taiwan 3) a reciprocal and fair trade based on transparent agreements, open investment and connectivity, a field where Taiwan has a positive record in implementing regulations and rules relative to international commerce and trade 4) the strategic location of Taiwan in terms of freedom of navigation. Besides, in both 2019 and 2021 reports, Taiwan is putting emphasis on the respect of international norms (non-proliferation, counter-terrorism international security norms, international law regarding the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea). Already in 2017, the national defense report was mentioning Washington and Tokyo Indo-Pacific strategies and how they were connected to Taiwan. Furthermore, the 2019 report is the only one to use exactly the US and Japan terminology, stating that Taiwan is “promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region”. In a subsection entitled “Global Views towards Taiwan’s Linkage with Security in the Indo-Pacific Region”, which is not present in the 2021 report, it was written that “the ROC maintains a free, democratic, and open presence to help ensure the freedom, openness, and sustainable prosperity for the Indo-Pacific region”. Besides, India’s Act East Policy as well as the statement of Narendra Modi during the 2018 Shangri-la Dialogue were evoked in the 2019 report, while the 2021 report mentioned the ASEAN

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44 Ibid.
45 S. Kumar, “Taiwan vital to Indo-Pacific strategy”, Taipei Times, 3 September 2021.
46 It has to be noted that in that field, Taiwan has some divergences with the US: like China, it “does not think a foreign warship can cross into its territorial sea on innocent passage without prior notification”. Therefore, the “US Navy listed Taiwan as a country that was a target of its FONOP in the Spratlys” (where Taiping island is Taiwanese). (Source: J. Ku, “Taiwan and the United States Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”, Asia’s Response to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, Washington : Cambridge University Press, vol.113. pp. 383-387, 2019). In the 2021 annual report of US FONOPS, Taiwan is still listed as making excessive maritime claims in South China Sea, because of a “prior notification required for foreign military or government vessels to enter the territorial sea [Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, Janv 21, 1998]”, (Source: Annual Freedom of Navigation Report, Department of Defense of the United States Besides, 2021). Besides, the ROC and the PRC share commonalities as they both claim the legitimacy of the so-called nine-dash line and U-shaped lines. In 2005, the ROC suspended its claims to the entire waters included within the line but is still claiming the land features. The ROC is possessing the Taiping Island since 1956, in the Spratlys, and is in conflict with Vietnam and the Philippines over this island (and of course China). Eventually, like China, “Taiwan has rejected the legal applicability (or even the moral force) of the 2016 PCA Arbitral award that, among other things, invalidated China/Taiwan’s U-shaped line claim and its claim to an exclusive economic zone around Taiping Island”. (Source: J. Ku, “Taiwan and the United States Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy”, Asia’s Response to the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, Washington : Cambridge University Press, vol.113. pp. 383-387, 2019)
Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).

Not only the MoD but also Taiwan’s MOFA embraced the Indo-Pacific concept. In 2018, the Taiwanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened an Indo-Pacific section overseen by the MOFA’s Department of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. In the inauguration speech, Joseph Wu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated that “our country must not only actively seek opportunities to deepen cooperation with the United States, Japan, Australia, and India, but also, through our ‘New Southbound Policy’, deepen and develop cooperation with countries in the Indo-Pacific region with similar philosophies, so that our government can continue to play an important role in the stability and prosperity of the region”⁴⁹.

An Indo-Pacific vision promoted through different platforms

The Indo-Pacific concept is also embraced by various officials and actors at different levels, especially within track 1.5, track 2 exchanges, given Taiwan’s diplomatic isolation and the impossibility to hold formal discussions between officials. Track 2 exchanges and think tanks are mentioned in several Taiwanese national defense reports as useful platforms to “speak out for Taiwan and garner recognition and support for its defense security stance”⁵⁰. For instance, on December 14, 2021, the 11th annual Taiwan-US-Japan Trilateral Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue was held between the think tanks Prospect Foundation, the Center for a New American Security, and the Japan Institute of International Affairs and commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROC. Former famous political figures such as Shinzo Abe or Robert O’Brien were present. During this dialogue, Tsai Ing-wen reaffirmed the “government’s commitment to working with like-minded partners in promoting a secure, peaceful, free and open Indo-Pacific region.”⁵¹ In 2019, the US-Taiwan Consultations on Democratic Governance in the Indo-Pacific Region was launched between the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT; the de facto US Embassy in Taiwan), the MOFA and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the US Department of State. The main goals are 1) promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific 2) promoting Taiwan as a model of good governance 3) promoting joint programs that help other countries in the region 4) promoting Taiwan’s international presence⁵². The Ketagalan Forum-Asia-Pacific Security Dialogue⁵³ gathering political figures and scholars from the US, Japan, France, India, Australia, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines, or the Indo-Pacific Security

⁴⁹ “因應印太 (Indo-Pacific)新局勢，我國策進作為”, 專案報告, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 23 May 2018
⁵² “The Inaugural Session of the US-Taiwan Consultations on Democratic Governance in the Indo-Pacific Region”, American Institute in Taiwan, 12 September 2019.
⁵³ “Ketagalan Forum – 2021 Asia-Pacific Security Dialogue to discuss regional security issues in the postpandemic era”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan) Department of Policy Planning, 20 August 2021
Dialogue organized in 2018 with panelists coming from the US and Japan are also “semi-official” platforms that give Taiwan an occasion to put emphasis on the role it can play in the Indo-Pacific. In the 2018 Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue, Tsai Ing-wen “framed Taiwan’s contributions with respect to the Indo-Pacific in terms of various lines of effort […]. On the governance pillar, for example, she noted the holding of a civil society dialogue on religious freedom in the Indo-Pacific […], in addition to the Women’s Economic Empowerment Summit […]. And on connectivity, she referenced ongoing efforts by Taipei to work with US institutions such as the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) in order to provide assistance with respect to the pursuit of infrastructure projects in Southeast Asia”\(^5^4\).

Similarly, the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF) is a platform “for the US and Taiwan to enhance multilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific”\(^5^5\). Established in 2015, it started as a bilateral mechanism between Taiwan and the US but now it has four co-hosts with the addition of Australia and Japan, working on themes from improving media literacy and good governance to women’s empowerment as well as responding to infectious disease.

The Pacific Island Dialogue, held between the Taiwanese MOFA and the AIT, was also launched in 2019. This dialogue where foreign representatives from New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Japan and other nations are also invited, explore cooperation avenues to facilitate assistance projects and joint efforts in the Pacific. The US and Taiwan also discuss matters related to APEC, one of the very few international organizations in which Taiwan can participate. Co-hosting the 2019 Pacific Island Dialogue, Sandra Oudkirk, US Senior Official for APEC and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, insisted on the coherence between the US FOIP and Taiwan’s involvement in the region, stating that “we firmly support Taiwan’s relationships with Pacific Island nations. We have a shared vision for the region – one that includes rule of law, prosperity, and security for all. We want to explore how we can join Taiwan in advancing this vision for an Indo-Pacific that is free, open, and thriving.”\(^5^6\)

Therefore, it seems that both official documents from Taiwan’s government and track 1.5, track 2 platforms show to what extent Taiwan took hold of the Indo-Pacific concept around 2017-2018 and adopted a vision very close to that promoted by the United States and Japan, its two traditional friends. Besides, Taiwan has concrete policies and tools to give life to this vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific.

**Taiwan’s tools to support its Indo-Pacific concept**

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\(^{5^4}\) P. Parameswaran, “Taiwan as an Indo-Pacific Contributor”, *The Diplomat*, 17 April 2019.

\(^{5^5}\) G. Faerber, “Synergies between Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy and Biden’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy”, *Taiwan Insight*, University of Nottingham Taiwan Studies Program, 27 September 2021

\(^{5^6}\) “Remarks by Sandra Oudkirk, US Senior Official for APEC and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands”, American Institute in Taiwan, 7 October 2019.
In the 2018 inaugural speech of the MOFA’s Indo-Pacific section, Taiwanese policies in this field were defined as “connecting the New Southbound policy and Indo-Pacific Strategy” (聯結「新南向政策」及「印太戰略」)\(^{57}\), highlighting the importance of the NSP within Taiwan’s Indo-Pacific concept, as well as its linkage with other countries’ Indo-Pacific strategies. Indeed, during the 2020 Yushan Forum, Tsai Ing-wen stated that NSP “goals and ideals coincide with those of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Outlook on the Indo-Pacific and India’s Act East Policy”\(^{58}\). Interestingly, the 2019 US FOIP official document also stated that “the US vision and approach in the Indo-Pacific region aligns closely with Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept, India’s Act East Policy, Australia’s Indo-Pacific concept, the Republic of Korea’s New Southern Policy, and Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy”\(^{59}\), therefore putting Taiwan in the same basket as major Indo-Pacific partners.

Launched in 2016 by Tsai Ing-wen, the NSP followed the previous ‘Go South’ policy implemented under Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian administrations, which were not successful because of lucrative opportunities in mainland China in terms of investments. One of the main objectives is economic diversification (echoing South Korean New Southern Policy NSP), China being the main trade partner of Taiwan and cross-Strait relations being increasingly tensed. The NSP came at a time when increased wages and a more competitive environment in China naturally pushed Taiwanese companies to look for other markets to relocate. However, it is a two-way exchange and is also focused on NSP countries nationals presence in Taiwan. The NSP targets include the 10 ASEAN countries, six States in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan), as well as Australia and New Zealand. Consistent with Taiwan’s Indo-Pacific vision, it promotes a stronger economic and cultural connectivity with other Indo-Pacific countries. Its policy flagship programs include 1) regional agricultural development 2) medical and public health cooperation and the development of industrial chains 3) industrial talent development 4) industrial innovation and cooperation 5) the new southbound policy forum and youth exchange platform\(^{60}\). It also encompasses three innovative fields: e-commerce, infrastructure (smart city building, renewable energy, and not big infrastructure projects) and tourism.

Some achievements can be noted. The Philippines signed different cooperation documents, including a new Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA), with Taiwan. In late 2018, amidst Sino-Indian tensions, an updated BIA was signed between Taiwan and

\(^{57}\) “因應印太 (Indo-Pacific)新局勢，我國策進作為”, 導案報告, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), 23 May 2018

\(^{58}\) “President Tsai addresses opening of 2020 Yushan Forum”, Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), 8 October 2020

\(^{59}\) “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Advancing a Shared Vision”, Department of State of the US, 4 November 2019, p. 8

India, suggesting that “Taiwan would face difficulties in Southeast Asia unless the NSP countries are willing to bear the cost of China’s anger”\textsuperscript{61}. Indeed, the NSP goals are hindered by China’s coercion as some countries “worry that supporting the NSP might entrap them into a brawl with China”\textsuperscript{62}. Yet, even though the ‘One China’ policy is recognized by NSP countries, it did not prevent Vietnam to sign a renewed BIA with Taiwan in 2019.

The NSP has also evolved towards a ‘people-centered’ approach: it does not mean that Taiwan gave up the economic exchanges but “a breakthrough in economic affairs is usually constrained by the lack of formal relations and China’s interruption”\textsuperscript{63} and tourism, educational exchanges with South Asia for instance have shown more progress than economic cooperation. The ‘people-centered’ NSP is focusing on cultural-historical connections between Taiwan and the region. Being a two ways exchange, it both introduces Taiwan to NSP countries and brings NSP countries cultures to Taiwan to improve Taiwanese people’s understanding and awareness of the region, a necessary step to better understand the economic environment of these countries but also to bring Taiwan’s viewpoints into policies’ dialogs. To do so, partnerships between Taiwanese policy research institutes and their counterparts in NSP countries are also supported\textsuperscript{64}. Interestingly, this track 2 diplomacy seems particularly compatible with ASEAN informal and para-diplomatic processes with quasi-institutionalized track 1.5, track 2 strategic dialogues.

The cultural collaboration goes further as Taiwan capitalizes a lot on immigrants settling in Taiwan, a majority of them coming from Southeast Asia. Cross-border marriage (around 20% of the marriage cases in Taiwan) and the children who have at least one immigrant parent (10%) can build sustainable bridges between Taiwan and NSP countries. Besides, NSP initiatives “transform Taiwan’s self-perception (in terms of foreign relations) from being part of East Asia to being part of Southeast Asia”\textsuperscript{65}. This is a long-term process which is not without political objectives: “as the connections between peoples increase, the Taiwanese government expects that citizens and the governments in Southeast Asia are inclined to accept Taiwan as a member of the region. Then the government can take a step forward to establish closer ties on the semi-official

\textsuperscript{61} P.K Chen, « Taiwan’s “people-centered” New Southbound Policy and its impact on US-Taiwan relations », Pacific review. vol.33 n° 5, 2020, pp. 813-841.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} For instance, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSAP) and the Center for Southeast Asia Studies (CSEAS) at National Chengchi University established ties with Vietnamese and Singaporean institutions. The Taiwan-Asia Exchange Foundation (TAEF), which hosts the Yushan Forum, was created by the government to forge think tank cooperation as well as civil society partnership. It recently signed a MoU with the New Delhi-based National Maritime Foundation (NMF). It also established the Asia Engagement Consortium, gathering think tanks and NGOs and promoting think tank diplomacy to express Taiwanese views on policies issues, and especially among ASEAN countries.
\textsuperscript{65} P.K Chen, « Taiwan’s “people-centered” New Southbound Policy and its impact on US-Taiwan relations », Pacific review. vol.33 n° 5, 2020, pp. 813-841.
or official level”⁶⁶.

Yet, difficulties in implementing and strengthening the NSP economic component is not only due to Chinese pressure but also to problems in the host countries (lack of regulation and rule of law, bad governance, protectionist policy and breach of trust) hindering the implementation of Taiwanese companies in some countries such as Indonesia, India or Malaysia. Besides, the soft policy design per se of the NSP (with essentially non-political and depoliticized initiatives not to trigger China’s response) has inherent weaknesses: the private domain and people-to-people connection is expected to have a limited impact on formal relations at the State level and the evaluation of the NSP policy effects remains vague with a lack of good metrics and the difficulty to evaluate the quality of linkages.

**Taiwan’s ‘Austronesian diplomacy’**: connecting with Pacific countries

Highlighted by the Pacific Islands Dialogue and the Taipei-Washington nexus over the Pacific (more particularly for the countries belonging to the Compact of Free Association⁶⁷), Taiwan’s activities in the South Pacific “are largely supportive of the goals of the US ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’ strategy”⁶⁸, more especially at a time when China is increasingly exploiting Oceania for both economic, political and strategic gains (the last move to date being the security agreement with the Solomon islands, the other agreements signed with Samoa, Fiji and Kiribati islands, as well as China’s attempt to conclude a security and trade deal with 10 Pacific Island nations), challenging the free and liberal order the US and Taiwan are attached too. Taiwan is also a development partner of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), providing regular annual funding and is already engaged in assistance programs in the Pacific islands. To try to compete with China (in other terms than monetary value of aid), Taiwan “has emphasized projects that build personal working relationships with the recipient island states, as opposed to the PRC’s approach of investing in large construction projects (usually employing imported Chinese workers) and resource extraction.”⁶⁹. Once again, Taiwan is putting emphasis on people-to-people links (in economic and cultural terms) and youth education: “typical of this approach is the Taipei-funded Pacific Islands Leadership Program, a ten-week course that trains young Pacific Islands professionals in Taiwan and at the East-West Center in Honolulu.”⁷⁰. Besides, the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) “provides relatively noncontroversial opportunities for cooperation”⁷¹ between the US and Taiwan in the South Pacific⁷². Interestingly, Sandra

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⁶⁶ Ibid.
⁶⁷ The Federate States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands and Palau.
⁶⁸ R. Denny, « Taiwan’s potential role in the Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. Convergence in the South Pacific », The National Bureau of Asian Research, March 2019
⁶⁹ Ibid.
⁷⁰ Ibid.
⁷¹ Ibid.
⁷² In 2017, the US Navy already invited ROC military medical personnel to participate in US led HADR training exercise in Kiribati; the same in the Solomon Islands in 2018. In 2013, under the direction of US
Oudkirk, who was mentioned above, is the newly appointed Director of the AIT. Her experience within the APEC and regarding Pacific nations, in contrast to the previous AIT Director Brent Christensen who essentially served at the US Embassy in Beijing, “denotes a paradigm shift in US foreign policy, recognizing Taiwan’s growing membership in a new community in the Asia-Pacific and disassociation from its traditional grouping with China and East Asia”73. This new paradigm echoes Taiwan’s will, for geopolitical and economic goals, to redefine its identity and to see itself as more than just a Northeastern Asian country.

Taiwan is also putting an increasing emphasis on its Austronesian identity (the first inhabitants and autochthrones of Taiwan being Austronesian people) to connect with the different countries sharing this feature. An example is the host of National Indigenous Games gathering nine Austronesian nations, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia being among them, and showing the link made between the NSP and Taiwan’s ‘Austronesia diplomacy’. “Because the languages of Taiwan’s indigenous populations and numerous Pacific peoples all belong to the Austronesian language group, these linguistic similarities are used to strengthen diplomatic ties while simultaneously asserting Taiwan’s innate difference from the PRC”76. Taiwan’s Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP) and the Austronesian forum, are among the most important tools used by Taiwan to push forward its ‘Austronesia diplomacy’.

It has to be noted that the term ‘Austronesia’ is designing a linguistic group but the Taiwanese discourse on ‘Austronesian diplomacy’ (南島外交) is also referring to cultural, ethnic ties in addition to linguistic ones, a broader definition Pacific nations do not necessarily agree with (even though commonalities can be shared, for instance between the Tuvalu and indigenous Taiwanese). Besides, while the Austronesian group is encompassing more countries than the only ones from the Pacific, Taiwan is only referring to Pacific nations. For instance, even though Austronesian languages are spoken in Madagascar and despite the strategic location of this country in the Indian Ocean, Taiwan did not try to use this Austronesian link to get closer to Tananarive, where it does not have representative offices. Furthermore, and more importantly, Taiwan puts a strong emphasis on the concept of ‘indigeneity’ by referring to Pacific allies as ‘Austronesian indigenous countries’. But because the majority of the populations of Pacific nations is composed of indigenous people who are not a marginalized

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73 G. Faerber, “Synergies between Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy and Biden’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy”, Taiwan Insight, University of Nottingham Taiwan Studies Program, 27 September 2021
74 It has to be noted that the term ‘Austronesia’ is designing a linguistic group but the discourse on Austronesian diplomacy is also referring to cultural, ethnic ties in addition to linguistic ones.
75 P. Charlier, “Austronesian youth from 9 nations will join Taiwanese indigenous people at this year’s National Indigenous Games”, Taiwan English News, 18 March 2021
76 J. Marinaccio, “‘We’re Not Indigenous. We’re Just, We’re Us’: Pacific Perspectives on Taiwan’s Austronesian Diplomacy”, The China Alternative. Changing Regional Order in the Pacific Islands, Graeme Smith, Terence Wesley-Smith, ANU Press, 2021, pp. 349-374.
community fighting for its recognition against another ethnic group, Pacific nations do not specifically emphasize this characteristic. In that respect, Taiwan is much closer to New Zealand (with which cooperation agreements have been signed for Maori-Taiwanese indigenous people-to-people exchanges), Guam, Hawai, Tahiti or New Caledonia, all settler colonies using the same concepts of indigeneity. As a consequence, Taiwanese Austronesian diplomacy is more relevant for those countries and lacks efficiency among the other Pacific nations. Interestingly, many Pacific diplomats and citizens were unfamiliar with the ‘Austronesia’ term before coming to Taiwan or were adopting another type of definition, showing in what measure Taiwan’s ‘Austronesia diplomacy’ lacks resonance. Worst, the current marginalization of indigenous people in Taiwan can result in the marginalization of Pacific nations inhabitants, with stereotypes conveyed by the Han of Taiwan. And when President Tsai Ing-wen visited Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands in 2017 and named these trips as ‘search for relatives’ (尋親之旅), it caused an important debate in Taiwan, being perceived as an attempt to de-Sinicise Taiwan. This conflict in terms of identity definition is directly impacting the ‘Austronesian diplomacy’ efficiency as “when Austronesian diplomacy is seen by certain portions of Taiwan’s Han population as reconfiguring Taiwanese culture and ethnicity, indigenous and Pacific peoples are further ostracized”

Besides, the effectiveness of Taiwan’s Austronesian diplomacy towards Pacific independent nations has even been more questioned when in September 2019, Solomon Islands and Kiribati forged ties with the PRC and stopped to recognize Taiwan in the same week. China has also succeeded in pressuring its own diplomatic allies: Fiji closed its representative office in Taiwan after a visit of the Fijian prime minister to Beijing in 2017 and PNG decided to change the name of the “Trade Mission of the Republic of China (on Taiwan)” to ”Taipei Economic and Cultural Office”. Currently, only 4 Pacific nations are Taiwan’s diplomatic allies: Tuvalu, Nauru, Marshall Islands and Palau.

However, despite all the flaws of the ‘Austronesian diplomacy’, different Pacific states use it as a tool to communicate and negotiate in a privileged manner with the Taiwanese government, as well as a an ethnic/cultural rationale to explain why they maintain separate relations with Taiwan and China. Furthermore, as the idea of indigeneity is much more shared in Pacific settler colonies, it suggests that “wile Austronesian diplomacy is not highly effective for Pacific allies, it is more compelling to non-allied settler colonies. Though not beneficial to maintaining official ties, this phenomenon can allow Taiwan and its indigenous peoples to strengthen unofficial links in ways that increase visibility and empathy throughout the Pacific”

Hardships to go beyond economic and cultural ties

For both the NSP and the ‘Austronesian diplomacy’, some of the flaws are linked with

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
Taiwan’s relations with China and its diplomatic isolation. Since 1971, when Taiwan had to withdraw from the United Nations in favour of the PRC, which is considered the sole representative of China by the international community, Taiwan is absent from the UN organizations and is not a signatory to most international treaties. Taiwan was once invited as an observer to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) or the World Health Organization (WHO), but this is no longer the case. However, Taiwan is a member of the Asian Development Bank and APEC under the name of "Chinese Taipei", the International Olympic Committee or the WTO under the name of "Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, Matsu". In terms of free trade agreements, Taiwan has signed two FTAs with Guatemala and Panama and one jointly with Honduras and El Salvador. The Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA; 2010) was signed with China. Economic cooperation agreements have been signed between Taiwan and New Zealand (2013), Singapore (2013), Paraguay (2019), Eswatini (2019), and the Marshall Islands (2019).

This lack of official relations and its absence in major multilateral organizations is also preventing Taiwan to build a comprehensive and coherent Indo-Pacific strategy: it is impossible for Taiwan to establish formal political and security alliances with major Indo-Pacific actors. Taiwan cannot attend joint military exercises (if we exclude the very limited presence of US troops on Taiwan's soil to offer some training sessions), cannot take part into UN missions, and therefore cannot make any military projection in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, to contribute to the freedom of navigation and signaling to China. Therefore, the military component of its strategy in the Indo-Pacific is only about its own national defense, a field in which the asymmetry of resources in comparison to China and other Indo-Pacific actors, is generating further uncertainties for the future of cross-Strait relations. According to the US DoD 2021 report about “Military and security developments involving the People’s Republic of China”, Taiwan’s total ground personnel is about 88,000 soldiers against 1,040,000 in China. The assets in terms of air force are rather balanced across the Strait. But in terms of naval forces, Taiwan has no aircraft carrier (2 for China and a third under construction), no cruiser (1 for China), 4 destroyers (32 for China), 22 frigates (48 for China), no corvette (51 for China), only 2 Diesel attack submarines (56 for China), 0 NAS (9 for China), 0 BMS (6 for China). Besides, Taiwan is not a nuclear power unlike China. Eventually, the defence budget of Taiwan for 2022 was around 17 billion USD (+5,2% in comparison to 2021, 2,1% of the GDP forecast for 2022), against 230 billion USD for China (+7,1%; below 2% of the GDP according different forecasts).

Conclusion

Currently, only 14 states recognize officially Taiwan: Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Paraguay, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, Tuvalu, and the Vatican City.

Since 2019 and given the cross-Strait increasing tensions, Taiwan get an increasing importance and visibility in different Indo-Pacific strategies (either through official documents or other actions/declarations), even though most of the support does not come from South Asia, neither from Southeast Asia. Around 2017, this Indo-Pacific concept has been adopted at different levels by Taiwan, supporting the notions of security, sovereignty, freedom, prosperity and connectivity in the region, and advocating on its coherence with other Indo-Pacific strategies. The NSP and the ‘Austronesian diplomacy’ are the two main frameworks for Taiwan to achieve these goals, mainly through economic (investments, aids, assistance programs, loans) and cultural (education, tourism, migration, ethnicity, language) linkages. Yet, in addition to the shortcomings contained in these initiatives, Taiwan’s particular status on the international stage and its limited budget are hindering the full implementation of these policies, as well as its ultimate objective to get more allies in the Indo-Pacific for securing a political support. Besides, it is also preventing Taiwan’s Indo-Pacific concept to incorporate a military component which would go beyond its own national defense. Taking part into some recent initiatives such as Blue Dot Network gathering US, Japan, Australia, Supply Chain Resilience Initiative by India, Japan and Australia, Partnership for Quality Infrastructure managed by Japan, or Build Back Better World (B3W) Partnership by the G7 could be relatively non-controversial avenues of cooperation allowing Taiwan to strengthen its links with major Indo-Pacific countries and getting closer to NSP and Pacific countries through a multilateral format. Being accepted as a member of the CPTTP would also help Taiwan to go further in its connectivity objectives.
## Annex I. Taiwan and the main Indo-Pacific strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/block which has developed an Indo-Pacific strategy</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Mention of Taiwan in the official document</th>
<th>Mention of China* in the official document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>“ASEAN outlook on the Indo-Pacific”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>“2020 Defence Strategic Update”</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (7 times)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“2016 Defence White Paper”</td>
<td>Yes (as an important trading partner)</td>
<td>Yes (44 times)</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>New Southern Policy Plus</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(it has to be noted that the ROK doesn’t have an IP strategy <em>per se</em>, but rather a strategy in the IP of which cornerstone is the NSP)</td>
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</table>
- In the context of tensions within Taiwan’s strait who may have an impact on “European security and prosperity”  
- The importance of diversifying supply chains and trade relations for the EU, Taiwan being described as a “partner” of the EU in the strategic sector of semiconductors, along with South Korea and Japan  
- The trade and investment relationships with partners with whom the EU doesn’t have trade and investment agreements, naming specifically Taiwan  
- Working groups about illegal, unreported and unregulated | Yes (14 times) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Relevant Document and Description</th>
<th>Frequency of Yes</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</table>
| France | French strategy in the Indo-Pacific (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)  
**February 2022 updated version**  
- Convergence between data protection regimes (Taiwan being cited as adopting modern data protection laws that “could pave the way for future adequacy talks”)  
- In the context of tensions within the Taiwan’s Strait (it was not mentioned in the previous version)  
- The network of French embassies and representations in the case of Taiwan and North Korea  
- In terms of partnerships in the field of education, research and innovation  
- In terms of European trade and investments, Taiwan being defined as a “key partner in global value chains” (a new feature in comparison to the previous version) | Yes (7 times) | Yes (13 times) |
| France | French strategy in the Indo-Pacific (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)  
**July 2021 version**  
- The network of French embassies and representations in the case of Taiwan and North Korea  
- In terms of partnerships in the field of education, research and innovation | Yes (5 times) | Yes (15 times) |
<p>| France | French Defense strategy in the Indo-Pacific | No | Yes (16 times) |
| Germany | Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific | Yes (1 time): only on a map regarding the economy | Yes (44 times) |
| India | Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at Shangri-La Dialogue (June 2018) | No. | Yes (3 times) |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Japan     | “Defense of Japan” (Japan’s Defense White Paper, 2021, Minister of Defense) | Yes (180 times). It has to be noted that the document is much longer than other documents (512 pages):  
- Regarding “PLA’s Recent Activities in the Surrounding Sea Area and Airspace of Japan”  
- The military trends in the South China Sea and around Taiwan. And “Stabilizing the situation surrounding Taiwan is important for Japan’s security”  
- The military capabilities  
- The strategic positioning of Okinawa and its importance for the US forces stationed there regarding a potential conflict over Taiwan | Yes (in more than 178 pages and several times) |
|           | “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” Basic Thinking Material (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) | No. | No. |
| Netherlands | “Indo-Pacific: Guidelines for strengthening Dutch and EU cooperation with partners in Asia” | No. | Yes (14 times) |
| New Zealand | “Strategic Intentions” (2021-2025) Minister of Foreign Affairs Defence assessment 2021 (Ministry of Defence) | Yes (1 time): regarding China’s militarization and efforts on “building capabilities intended to deter and defeat adversaries from operating within the ‘First Island Chain’ (Japan-Taiwan-Philippines-Borneo)” | Yes (28 times). |
| The US    | “Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States” February 2022; | Yes (8 times):  
- Regarding the “PRC’s coercion and aggression”, the “growing pressure on Taiwan” | Yes (2 times) |
### The White House

- In the context of “building connections” and “strengthening relationships with leading regional partners”, Taiwan being among them
- The importance to “maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, including by supporting Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities, to ensure an environment in which Taiwan’s future is determined peacefully in accordance with the wishes and best interests of Taiwan’s people”
- The “commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act, the Three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances”

### “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific. Advancing a Shared Vision.” November 2019, Department of State

- Yes (10 times): Mentioned as a country sharing the same values as the US
- As a bilateral partner: **The US vision and approach in the Indo-Pacific region aligns closely with** Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific concept, India’s Act East Policy, Australia’s Indo-Pacific concept, the Republic of Korea’s New Southern Policy, and **Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy** (p8)
- “We are also strengthening and deepening our relationship with Taiwan.” p8
- Concern over Beijing’s coercive actions to “bully Taiwan” p8
- Mention of the TRA, the sales of defense equipment
- Cooperation regarding public health, media disinformation, women’s empowerment, digital economy, and governance
- Mention of the Pacific Islands Dialogue (PID first held in 2019)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Yes (around 80 times)</th>
<th>Yes (31 times):</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The Department of Defense Indo-Pacific Strategy Report” June 2019, DoD</td>
<td></td>
<td>China’s coercive actions against Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As an important partner put at the same level as Singapore, New Zealand and Mongolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Breakthrough with Taiwan designated as a ‘country’: “As democracies in the Indo-Pacific, Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Mongolia are reliable, capable and natural partners of the United States. All four countries contribute to US missions around the world and are actively taking steps to uphold a free and open international order” (p30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All a page dedicated to Taiwan (p31) in the section “strengthening partnerships”: “the objective of our defense engagement with Taiwan is to ensure that Taiwan remains secure, confident, free from coercion, and able to peacefully and productively engage the mainland on its own terms”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• “US commitments to Taiwan’s defense and international space” in the conclusion (p 29)
United Kingdom  “Global Britain in a competitive age”  No.  Yes (26 times).

*only the word “China” (and not the one of “PRC”) has been used for this research.

Annex II. Appearance of the Indo-Pacific term in Taiwanese national defense reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of publication</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>President of Taiwan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>“Asia-Pacific Security Development”, “Taiwan’s Strategic Role in Asia-Pacific Security”</td>
<td>Chen Shui-bian (DPP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>“Asia-Pacific Security Situation”</td>
<td>Ma Ying-jeou (KMT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific</td>
<td>Ma Ying-jeou (KMT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>“Asia-Pacific Security Situation”</td>
<td>Ma Ying-jeou (KMT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“Asia-Pacific Security Situation”</td>
<td>Ma Ying-jeou (KMT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2017                | First appearance of the “Indo-Pacific” term (mentioned 3 times, showing that there is a shy breakthrough):
|                     | • In the section “Changes in the Asia-Pacific Security Situation”, President Trump changes of policies are described. “During his talk with Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, he put forward the strategic view of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region, including the vast ocean area from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean and peripheral countries, with the aim to bring India into US’s alliance system to share regional responsibility” (p16).
|                     | • On a map (p29), “Indo-Pacific region” is presented as separated from “Asia-Pacific region”, two zones that overlap each other. This “Diagram of Taiwan’s Geo-strategic Position” is putting emphasis on the fact that Taiwan is belonging to the zones and is connected to the different actors in the region. | Tsai Ing-wen (DPP) |
• The report states that “located in a central position with regard to the South China Sea, East China Sea and Western Pacific at the hub of transportation routes in the Asia-Pacific region, Taiwan has irreplaceable geo-strategic importance. The Indo-Pacific vision proposed by the US and Japan further highlights its geo-political importance”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>“Indo-Pacific” term mentioned 58 times:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Section 1: “Trends in the Indo-Pacific Security Environment”**

- “The Indo-Pacific region covers a vast area in between the Pacific Ocean and west coast of India and its neighbouring countries”
- “The ROC will continue building up close partnership with like-minded countries to protect our respective sovereignty while promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region”

**Section 2: “Defense Policies of Countries in the Indo-Pacific Region”**

- On the “Diagram of Taiwan’s Geostrategic Location” (p27), the report is not making a difference between the Indo-Pacific zone and the Asia-Pacific zone as in the 2017 report. The 2019 report is identifying one only Indo-Pacific Region including the Indian and Pacific Oceans.
- Mention of the Indo-Pacific strategies of the US and Japan
- Mention of the defense policies of South Korea, India, Australia and ASEAN

**Section 3: “Taiwan’s Strategic Role in the Indo-Pacific Region”**

- Taiwan is presented as a “key to Peace and Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region” (p33)
  o vital geostrategic role (first island chain

Tsai Ing-wen (DPP)
of the Western Pacific)
  - its conformity of universal values and models (quoting US Vice President Mike Pence, “Taiwan’s embrace of democracy shows a better path for all the Chinese people”)
  - Continuation of Developing Free Economy: mention of the Index of Economic Freedom and the IMD World Competitiveness
  - Improvement of Information Security Cooperation
  - Support of International Security Norms: “containing terrorist operations, and international non-nuclear proliferation”
  - Promotion of non-conventional security cooperation: regarding natural disasters and contagious diseases

- **“Global Views towards Taiwan’s Linkage with Security in the Indo-Pacific Region”:** “The ROC maintains a free, democratic, and open presence to help ensure the freedom, openness, and sustainable prosperity for the Indo-Pacific region”. This part puts emphasis on the importance of Taiwan for the following countries:
  - Mention of the US: “US DoD’s *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* in 2019 stressed that the US is pursuing a strong partnership with Taiwan, ensure that Taiwan remains secure, confident, free from coercion, and will faithfully implement the Taiwan Relations Act.”
  - Mention of Japan: “The Taiwan Strait and its neighboring navigation routes are necessary passageways for Japan’s inbound/outbound transportation; therefore, the security of the Taiwan Strait is vital to its economic development”
  - Australia: “The Australian Office Taipei has expressed that Taiwan is an important partner to Australia and both countries can work hand-in-hand in the Indo-Pacific region”
  - India: mention of India’s Act East Policy, the Shangri-La Dialogue of 2018
- The European Union: “The European Parliament held a plenary session in December 2018 in Strasbourg, France, and adopted a resolution in response to the Annual Report on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), in which the contents of supporting Taiwan were added”
- The ASEAN: “in the recent Shangri-La Dialogues held in Singapore […], the security in the Taiwan Strait has become one of the hot topics among participating countries”
  - Mention of the New Southbound policy: “to expand the connections with the ASEAN, the South Asia, New Zealand, and Australia in trade, cultural, and educational fields, and help to demonstrate the role and value of our nation in the Indo-Pacific region” p31

Mention of US-Taiwan Military Cooperation (US Congressional Support, Foreign Military Sale, Military Exchange and Cooperation) and other exchanges with “Allies and Friendly Countries”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2021</th>
<th>“Indo-Pacific” term mentioned 47 times:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Like the 2019 defense report, the two sections of Part 1. Chapter 1. are directly mentioning the Indo-Pacific, entitled “Security Posture of the Indo-Pacific” and “Defense Policies of States in the Indo-Pacific”. The last section “A Resilient Island: Taiwan’s strategic value” is also putting emphasis on the strategic location of Taiwan within the Indo-Pacific.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- “Our nation is located at the critical position in the Indo-Pacific, and we are keenly working with like-minded nations by leveraging our geo-strategic importance and sturdy insistence on the values of freedom and democracy to jointly maintain regional peace and stability”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mention of the same security threats as in the 2019 report (force projection and intention to dominate the region from the PRC, threat of the nuclearization of North Korea, maritime disputes, non-conventional security threats) with the additional element of the pandemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Section 1: “Security Posture of the Indo-Pacific”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mention of US Indo-Pacific strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Mention of “US Remarks on Strengthening the Security in the Indo-Pacific and International”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tsai Ing-wen (DPP)
## Friendly Remarks on the ROC” (new feature in comparison to the 2019 report, highlighting the importance of statements in the view of Taiwan’s government):

- Talks between India’s Defence Minister and US Defense Secretary in March 2021 (no mention of Taiwan)
- US-South Korea 2+2 Talks in March 2021 (no mention of Taiwan)
- US-South Korea Summit in May 2021 (mention of Taiwan)
- US-Japan 2+2 Talks in March 2021 (mention of Taiwan)
- US-Japan Summit in April 2021 (mention of Taiwan)
- France-Australia 2+2 Talks in August 2021 (Mention of Taiwan)
- QUAD in March 2021 (no mention of Taiwan)
- G7 Summit in June 2021 (mention of Taiwan)
- EU-US Summit in June 2021 (mention of Taiwan)

### Section 2: “Defense policies of States in the Indo-Pacific”

- Mention of the US, Japan (with the *Defense of Japan 2021*, which “for the first time mentioned the security situation in the vicinity of Taiwan”, India, Australia (mention of AUKUS, the development of nuclear submarines and hypersonic missiles capabilities along with the US). **Mention for the first time of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP).**

### Section 3: “A Resilient Island: Taiwan’s Strategic Value”

- “Taiwan’s geostrategic advantage”: “located at a key node of strategic importance on the first island chain of the Indo-Pacific, linking sea lines of communication (SLCOs)"
- “Key player to Regional Peace and Stability”:
  - Model to Uphold Universal values: mention of the *Democracy Index, Freedom in the World*
  - **Important Partner in the Indo-Pacific Strategy (new feature):** and more specifically an important partner to the US (quote of the *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*)
  - **Assuring Stability Surrounding the Taiwan Strait (new feature):** “it has become an international consensus to maintain the peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait”. “the ROC Armed Forces
continue monitoring PRC’s military activities and movements at all times, sustaining a robust defense power to maintain the security in the surrounding areas of the Taiwan Strait and free passage of both air and sea lines of communication, and working as the peacekeepers in the Indo-Pacific to contribute substantially to the security and stability in the region.”

- Abiding by Norms of International Security (mention of counterterrorism and denuclearization and **new features** with the respect of international law within the South China Sea and calls for Taiwan’s participation in activities or meetings within the UN “and the security framework and dialogue mechanism in the Indo-Pacific”)

- Strengthening Joint Capacity for Information Security (emphasis put on **semiconductor industries** that were not mentioned in the 2019 report and on expertise sharing: “we will strengthen the joint capacities for information security to exchange and share information with **allies and partners** in this domain”)

- Participating Non-conventional Security Cooperation (mention of Covid-19 in addition to terrorism and natural disasters)

Mention of US-Taiwan Military Cooperation (US Congressional Support, Foreign Military Sale, Military Exchange and Cooperation) and other exchanges with “Allies and Friendly Countries”
Taiwan’s role in the Indo-Pacific: From and Indo-Pacific actor to an Indo-Pacific maker?

Figure 1: Diagram of the ROC as a Key to Peace and Stability in the Indo-Pacific Region (Taiwan’s 2019 Defense Report)

Figure 2: Diagram of Taiwan’s Strategic Value (Taiwan’s 2021 Defense Report)
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