

## Building Alliance Partnerships in Support of Deterrence

### Introduction

At a time in which the developed democracies of the West surprised many observers—and perhaps even themselves—by displaying an impressive degree of unity and resolution in imposing sweeping economic and political sanctions on Russia in response to Vladimir Putin’s brutal invasion of Ukraine, there is no gainsaying the importance of international partnerships and collective action in facilitating effective responses to security challenges. Yet, by invading Ukraine, it is also obvious that Moscow was not deterred from forcefully challenging an obvious U.S. interest.

The Ukraine conflict has moved the question of security partnerships against authoritarian aggression into the foreground of international security policy, not least in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, these events have led many to wonder what implications Putin’s European war might have for long-standing U.S. hopes of deterring a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and, more broadly, for whether it will be possible for America to rally its allies and partners to prevent Beijing from seeking hegemony forcefully in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

The preceding chapters make clear that the contemporary challenges associated with deterring China from attacking Taiwan are more complex, and fundamentally more problematic, than those the United States faced in the Cold War. One major difference is the absence of a NATO-like alliance that was instrumental in deterring the Soviet Union. Given the geography, historical relationships and animosities, and, most importantly, differences in the national objectives of the regional states, it is unlikely that the United States could replicate an Asian multilateral treaty organization similar to NATO. Attempts to do so in the 1950s failed and the prospects today are likely even more uncertain. But there may well be opportunities for deepening existing, and creating alternative, alliance/partnership structures, both multilateral and bilateral, that include a commitment to Taiwan’s autonomy and the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Question. If the United States and its allies fully

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of writing, the Ukrainian armed forces seem to be performing remarkably well against the odds, see, e.g., “As Russia’s Military Stumbles, its Adversaries Take Note,” *DNYUZ* (March 7, 2022), available at <https://dnyuz.com/2022/03/07/as-russias-military-stumbles-its-adversaries-take-note/>; see also Eric Schmitt, Helene Cooper, & Julian E. Barnes, “How Ukraine’s Military Has Resisted So Far,” *The New York Times* (March 3, 2022), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/03/us/politics/russia-ukraine-military.html>. The Ukraine crisis—which has left the Russian army with its reputation for brutality undiminished but its reputation for competence and effectiveness in tatters – may also suggest lessons about the limitations of force in subduing democratic polities disinclined to be conquered by regional hegemons. In particular, the challenges faced by the Russian expeditionary force in the face of sophisticated Ukrainian small-unit, guerrilla, and popular mobilization tactics, for instance, as well as the willingness of key developed Western democracies to funnel effective arms and other assistance to Ukraine as it combats Kremlin forces, may suggest worrisome lessons for China as it contemplates a potential invasion of Taiwan. See Christopher Ford, “A People’s War Against the People’s Republic,” *The SCIF* blog (October 5-11, 2021), available at <https://www.newparadigmsforum.com/a-people-s-war-against-the-people-s-republic-detering-an-invasion-of-taiwan-in-three-parts>.

exploit these opportunities, it could increase the prospect for successfully deterring Chinese aggression.<sup>2</sup>

Strengthening current and establishing new political and military relationships could signal to Beijing that the United States will have some, perhaps even substantial, support from allies if China chooses to employ armed force to subdue Taiwan. As is discussed at length above, over the past decade, Beijing has shifted the regional power balance more in its favor—both military and economic—undermining the chances for effective deterrence.<sup>3</sup> To reverse this trend, the United States must work to bring to bear the political and, where feasible, military support of other regional states that believe China is a strategic threat to their national interests and to the region. When combined, the current resources of the United States, its allies and prospective partners in the Asia-Pacific far exceed those of China. The challenge is to bring these individual national resources into collective defense arrangements that can affect the existing power realities in the region—and thus favorably alter China’s deterrence calculus. Doing so may contribute significantly to a victory denial deterrence strategy.

For nearly 20 years, the United States and many of its partners have focused on the war on international terrorism. Until recently, the growing Chinese military threat, if not unnoticed altogether, was still considered a less urgent threat and one that could be managed over time. Only recently have the United States and other Western governments abandoned the false hope that Beijing would become a responsible stakeholder in the rules-based international order. It is evident that countering China is now a primary task at hand, as recognized by key allies such as Australia and Japan (and possibly South Korea in the future). With some notable exceptions, such as Vietnam, convincing other regional states of the need to respond to the growing Chinese threat remains a challenge, but a necessary one if the United States is to succeed in deterring China.

This chapter explores opportunities to strengthen a victory denial deterrence strategy through collective defense relationships, recognizing the inherent, substantial limitations noted above. It first examines the NATO model to identify lessons learned that may be relevant to the current security environment in the Asia-Pacific. It then examines existing U.S. alliance relationships to determine if and how they might be better structured to contribute to deterring or dissuading China from attacking Taiwan. It concludes by identifying steps that the United States, in concert with allies and other partners, could take to deny China any anticipation that achieving its war aims could be worth the likely costs. Given the broader recommended U.S. deterrence strategy of victory denial, the United States should approach alliance-building efforts with the intention of bringing to bear collective power sufficient to make clear to the CCP that enduring the political status quo of Taiwan is more tolerable than the costs that would be incurred in a failed or stalled invasion.

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<sup>2</sup> For additional commentary on the alliance implications of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, see, Sugio Takahashi, *Pitfalls in Deterring a Taiwan Conflict: “Unpreparable War”* (Fairfax, VA: National Institute for Public Policy, March 1, 2022), available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IS-516.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Such views are common even in broad surveys of the literature. For one such example, see, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2021 Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: USCC, November 2021), available at [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/2021\\_Annual\\_Report\\_to\\_Congress.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/2021_Annual_Report_to_Congress.pdf).

## Drawing from the NATO Experience

One of the most important assets in the U.S.-led effort to contain and deter the Soviet Union during the decades of the Cold War was the establishment of the NATO alliance in 1949. Originally comprised of 12 founding members (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States), NATO further expanded during the Cold War to include Greece and Turkey (1952), West Germany (1955), and Spain (1982). Additional countries have joined since the end of the Cold War,<sup>4</sup> and several more now appear eager to join the alliance. The primary driver behind building this alliance was the military and political threat emanating from the Soviet Union. Each of the participating countries benefitted from its NATO membership militarily and diplomatically.

First and foremost, the alliance—with its integrated political and military structures—signaled to the Soviet leadership that if Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces were to attack, NATO members would respond collectively to the assault. The attack on any one member would be met, consistent with Article 5 of the Treaty, with a potential response not only by U.S. forces but by the combined and integrated forces of alliance members, raising the costs and uncertainties associated with the Soviet war plan and Moscow's geostrategic goals. NATO thus contributed to the United States and allies achieving a more effective deterrent posture vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact than they would have been able to achieve individually. According to General Leopold Chalupa, Commander-in-Chief, Headquarters Allied Forces Central Europe (HQ AFCENT), from 1983 until 1987, "Neither the Americans on their own, nor the Europeans on their own would have been able to present a credible military deterrence and thus fight a credible war in Central Europe."<sup>5</sup>

Extending deterrence under conditions of Soviet regional military superiority and the ability to reach the U.S. homeland with long-range nuclear weapons was extremely difficult. The U.S. military posture in Europe was designed to make these commitments credible to the Soviet Union and U.S. allies alike. Even then, the United States was forced "to rely heavily on uncertainty for deterrent effect rather than the logic of a U.S. nuclear escalation deterrent threat."<sup>6</sup>

The French example illustrated the problems the United States faced in assuring allies given the Soviet Union's ever expanding nuclear and conventional capabilities, including at the strategic level. The Soviet Union's capability to reach the U.S. homeland with nuclear weapons made it "incumbent upon France to acquire its own nuclear force," as French President Charles de Gaulle stated at the time.<sup>7</sup> Despite this French decision, U.S. guarantees

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<sup>4</sup> Post-Cold War enlargement includes the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999), Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (2004), Albania and Croatia (2009), Montenegro (2017), and North Macedonia (2020).

<sup>5</sup> Jan Hoffenaar and Christopher Findlay, eds., *Military Planning for European Theater Conflict during the Cold War: An Oral History Roundtable Stockholm, 24-25 April 2006* (Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, 2006), p. 59, available at <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/nukevault/ebb285/ZB-79.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Payne, *Tailored Deterrence: China and the Taiwan Question, Occasional Paper*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2022, p. vi, available at <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Payne-OP-Vol-2-No-1-final.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> "Press Conference by President de Gaulle, Paris, 14th January 1963," in *Political Union of Europe*, Western European Union Assembly, General Affairs Committee, 10th Ordinary Session (Paris, June 1964), p. 88, available at <http://aei.pitt.edu/5777/1/5777.pdf>.

were essential for the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, and Japan to join the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states.<sup>8</sup> NATO's nuclear deterrent, underpinned primarily by U.S. strategic and forward-deployed nuclear forces, assured allies and provided them with the confidence needed to refrain from developing their own nuclear weapons.

NATO's political leaders were careful to craft a strong deterrent message, beginning in the early years of the alliance and carrying forward until the final days of the Soviet Union. This message took multiple forms, political and military, working together to deter Soviet leaders from pursuing armed conflict. The objective was spelled out in alliance doctrine, official communiques, and other public documents: communicate prospective costs and uncertainties that outweigh Moscow's potential gains. While the alliance deterrence posture maintained a degree of ambiguity about the specific military responses to aggression, NATO leaders understood that the deterrent message had to be backed by credible forces in being—including conventional, theater nuclear, and strategic—sufficient to convince Moscow that NATO had the will and the means to deny the Soviet Union its war aims. Together, this demonstration of collective resolve solidified alliance cohesion and provided members with the assurance of the U.S. commitment to their security.

U.S. forward-deployed forces increased the credibility of U.S. commitments. Forward deploying allowed for shorter reaction and response times in the event of a Warsaw Pact invasion of Western Europe. It enabled NATO countries to increase harmonization and interoperability, improve training procedures, and gain military proficiency through joint exercises and planning. This was particularly important for employment concepts and doctrine underpinned by NATO's integrated command structure. Equipment standardization contributed to achieving these goals more efficiently and at lower cost than would have been the case if each country had developed military capabilities on its own. Intelligence sharing also provided allied countries with a better operational picture than they would have achieved otherwise.

U.S. forward deployments helped ease the logistical burden of moving a large number of troops, equipment, and material from overseas to the European theater, a critical step given the Warsaw Pact's proximity to NATO's borders. They also served diplomacy because forward deployments created opportunities to build people-to-people relations and advance the U.S. image among allied countries' populations. Interactions within the NATO framework created additional opportunities for allies to access U.S. high-level leadership.

A more effective military posture and closer cooperation with the United States allowed NATO countries in Europe, recently ravaged by World War II and lacking any appetite for a conflict with the Soviet Union, to avoid being overrun by Soviet troops and to focus on rebuilding their economies and creating wealth. That in turn benefitted the American economy.

NATO also contributed to security among allies within NATO that had ongoing territorial conflicts. These conflicts did not end up escalating to a full-fledged war among NATO members (e.g., Turkey and Greece over Cyprus).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Susan Koch, "Extended Deterrence and the Future of the Nonproliferation Treaty," August 2018, p. 1, available at [https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/Security\\_Assurances\\_and\\_NPT\\_8-29.pdf](https://cgsr.llnl.gov/content/assets/docs/Security_Assurances_and_NPT_8-29.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Hoffenaar and Findlay, eds., *Military Planning for European Theater Conflict during the Cold War: An Oral History Roundtable Stockholm, 24-25 April 2006*, op. cit., p. 216.

Over the years, Soviet leaders placed a high priority on driving wedges between the United States and its European allies in order to loosen Western deterrence constraints. This effort was reflected in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the large-scale Soviet deployment of intermediate-range nuclear force (INF) missiles, particularly the SS-20, and the related massive Soviet disinformation and political subversion campaign designed to prevent the countervailing deployment of INF missiles by NATO. When the alliance held together and this Soviet campaign failed, Moscow knew that the resolve of NATO could not be upended. Deterrence prevailed and the collapse of the Soviet Union followed.

In part, the willingness of NATO members to sustain their commitment to deploy INF missiles to counter those of the Soviet Union was due to sustained U.S. leadership backed by consistent, high-level consultations among NATO governments, including at the highest political levels. Highly visible sessions of the Nuclear Planning Group (defense ministers), the North Atlantic Council (foreign affairs ministers), and NATO summits (heads of government) issued strong deterrent messages every year, warning Soviet leaders that NATO would respond forcefully to any aggression. Complementing a consistent, focused deterrent message were the conventional and nuclear military steps taken by the alliance. Close consultations and integrated military planning and exercises, including a biennial nuclear war game, made clear that deterrence was the first line of protection for all alliance members.

Although the situation today vis-à-vis China is different, with the weight and sophistication of Chinese military power growing at an alarming rate, both in the Indo-Pacific and in its potential for truly global power projection,<sup>10</sup> it is perhaps natural that questions should arise about whether the region would benefit from further multilateral security structures—perhaps even institutions analogous to those of NATO. In 2020, then-Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun, for instance, noted to an audience in India that the:

Indo-Pacific region is actually lacking in strong multilateral structures. They don't have anything of the fortitude of NATO or the European Union.... [T]here is certainly an invitation there at some point to formalize a structure like this.<sup>11</sup>

And, indeed, were it actually possible to construct a robust form of collective security for the Indo-Pacific along the lines of what NATO provides in Europe, that would certainly help provide a strong bulwark against Chinese aggression and thereby contribute significantly to a victory denial deterrence strategy. It is not clear, however, that such security multilateralism is viable for the Indo-Pacific, at least not yet.

## **Alliance Relationships in the Asia Indo-Pacific**

Collective security alliances focused primarily on the Soviet threat were also a part of the U.S. defense and deterrent posture in the Asia-Pacific during the Cold War years. In 1951, the United States established ANZUS, a trilateral treaty with Australia and New Zealand. Under

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<sup>10</sup> See, generally, U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2021: Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Defense Department, 2021) [hereinafter "DoD China Report"], available at <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Nov/03/2002885874/-1/-1/0/2021-CMPR-FINAL.PDF>.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Joshua Alley, "Does the Indo-Pacific Need an Alliance Like NATO?" *National Interest* (October 17, 2020), available at <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/does-indo-pacific-need-alliance-nato-170896>.



the treaty, each party was committed to consult in the event that the independence or security of any party was threatened and to “act to meet the common danger” consistent with the party’s “constitutional processes.” In practice, the arrangement provided Australia and New Zealand (until the latter’s suspension from the treaty by the United States in 1984 over Wellington’s anti-nuclear policies) with greater access to U.S. military capabilities, as well as improved policy coordination and defense planning.

It is worth remembering, in this regard, that such an effort *was* made once before. In 1954, the United States, Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand came together to form the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a direct analogue to NATO which had been formed just a few years earlier, and which was similarly designed to help regional countries resist Communist threats.

SEATO, however, is today remembered as a failure. Despite its ostensible focus upon “Southeast Asia,” it contained only two countries actually located in that region—the Philippines and Thailand—and it lacked institutional mechanisms for intelligence sharing or military coordination. More importantly, its members lacked a clear view of, and approach to, the very threats the organization supposedly existed to combat, with SEATO internally divided essentially from the outset about what (if anything) should be done about regional Communist guerrilla insurgencies and the growing U.S. role in Vietnam. By the early 1970s, members were beginning to pull out and the organization collapsed, being formally disbanded in 1977.<sup>12</sup> As one modern observer harshly appraises it:

...as a vehicle for collective defense, SEATO was a poor substitute [for NATO]. It neither provided for true common security, with no joint military command, no standing armed forces, and had only a vague and ineffective commitment against a ‘common danger.’<sup>13</sup>

While patterned after NATO, SEATO did not include an Article V-type commitment obligating members to respond collectively to aggression and did not lead to the creation of effective integrated commands and standing forces. Prior to its dissolution in 1977, SEATO (like its Middle East-focused counterpart, the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO) was generally considered ineffective as a security alliance in largely due to political differences within its membership.

The fact that NATO-style collective security failed then, of course, does not necessarily mean that it would fail again, nor that such mechanisms have no role in the future of an Indo-Pacific that is increasingly threatened by Chinese power and aggression. Nevertheless, the SEATO example highlights the degree to which military alliances are institutions that rely upon geopolitical “likemindedness,” including a common perception of threats, for their effectiveness.

The point here is simply that *alliances rely more upon shared values and vision* than they do upon specific treaty provisions. Where partners generally share commitments and threat perceptions, as with NATO, alliances can thrive for decades. Where they do not, they will not.

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<sup>12</sup> See, generally, U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian, “Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954,” (undated), available at <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato>.

<sup>13</sup> John J. Tierney, Jr., “Reviving SEATO,” *Institute for World Politics* (August 25, 2020), available at <https://www.iwp.edu/articles/2020/08/25/reviving-seato/>.

While an appreciation for the magnitude and immediacy of Chinese military threats certainly *is* growing in the Indo-Pacific—and is indeed making possible a growing breadth and depth of regional security cooperation—it is unclear that enough of a “demand signal” yet exists for NATO-style collective security for a future “Indo-Pacific Treaty Organization” (IPTO)<sup>14</sup> to succeed. Many regional states that increasingly fear China and seek closer relationships with America appear nonetheless reluctant to “choose sides” against Beijing in the overt way that an outright military alliance would imply.<sup>15</sup> It is also the case that some of them have difficulties *with each other* that would make formalizing a NATO-style defensive architecture challenging. Anti-Japanese sentiment remains a powerful element of South Korean nationalism,<sup>16</sup> for instance, and has sometimes made it difficult for Seoul and Tokyo even to do common-sense things like share intelligence about North Korea or China.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, while the various countries that surround the South China Sea all resent Beijing’s claims and fear China’s militarized self-aggrandizement there, many of them also have territorial claims *against each other*.<sup>18</sup> (It makes it more difficult for alliance partners to promise to defend each other’s territorial integrity against China if *they themselves* dispute the precise contours of the territories in question.)

Furthermore, some countries, such as India, also carry the political and psychological legacy of decades of anti-colonial activism and national self-identification *against* the former imperial powers of the developed West,<sup>19</sup> which makes the idea of a military alliance *with* countries such as the United States and Great Britain more problematic. Thankfully, India’s traditional anti-Western political culture does not rule out closer ties<sup>20</sup>—or even a “strategic partnership” with the United States<sup>21</sup>—but at least barring a significant escalation in Chinese

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<sup>14</sup> Some observers concerned about Chinese regional threats have indeed called for the establishment of such an organization. See, e.g., Lianchao Han and Bradley Thayer, “The Need for an Indo-Pacific Treaty Organization is Critical,” *The Hill* (September 30, 2021), available at <https://thehill.com/opinion/international/574204-the-need-for-an-indo-pacific-treaty-organization-is-critical>.

<sup>15</sup> See, generally, e.g., “Asian countries fear China but many won’t side with America,” *The Economist* (June 8, 2019), available at <https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/06/06/asian-countries-fear-china-but-many-wont-side-with-america>.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Gi-Wook Shin, “On Korean Nationalism and its Role in the Escalating Japan-South Korea Friction,” *Stanford Korea Program News* blog (September 5, 2019), available at <https://aparc.fsi.stanford.edu/korea/news/korean-nationalism-and-its-role-escalating-japan-south-korea-friction>; and, Tae-Jun Kang, “One South Korean Province Wants to Tag Japanese Firms as ‘War Criminals,’” *The Diplomat* (March 22, 2019), available at <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/one-south-korean-province-wants-to-tag-japanese-firms-as-war-criminals/>.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the following two references: Sasha Ingber, “South Korea To Scrap Military Intelligence-Sharing Agreement With Japan,” *NPR* (August 22, 2019), available at <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/22/753348880/south-korea-to-scrap-military-intelligence-sharing-agreement-with-japan>; and, Motoko Rich and Edward Wong, “Under U.S. Pressure, South Korea Stays in Intelligence Pact With Japan,” *The New York Times* (November 22, 2019), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/22/world/asia/japan-south-korea-intelligence.html>.

<sup>18</sup> See, generally, e.g., Ben Dolven, Susan V. Lawrence, and Ronald O’Rourke, “China Primer: South China Sea Disputes,” *Congressional Research Service Report IF 10607* (February 2, 2021), p. 1 (describing competing claims in South China Sea), available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10607>.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Richard M. Fontera, “Anti-Colonialism as a Basic Indian Foreign Policy,” *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (June 1960), pp. 421-432.

<sup>20</sup> Raja Mohan, “India Gives Up Its Anti-Colonial Obsessions and Embraces Europe,” *Foreign Policy* (May 18, 2021), available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/18/india-china-narendra-modi-johnson-britain-europe-eu-anti-colonialism-strategy-geopolitics/>.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., U.S. Department of State, “The United States and India: Deepening our Strategic Partnership,” *Fact Sheet* (July 27, 2021) (“The United States and India have a strong strategic partnership founded on shared values and a commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region. The United States supports India’s emergence as a leading global power and vital partner in

threats, formal alliances still seem problematic. For all these reasons, we should not expect a full-blown NATO-style alliance network to be possible anytime soon. Similarly, there is little prospect for re-establishing a SEATO-like entity focused on the China threat. Pakistan has become a close ally of China. Thailand and the Philippines, as discussed below, have also grown closer to and, in the former's case, increasingly dependent on China. New Zealand's nuclear policies continue to prevent any close security involvement with U.S. forces.

Currently, while ANZUS remains formally in effect (specifically between Australia and New Zealand), more recent steps have shifted the focus of the U.S.-Australian security relationship based on a shared assessment of China as the main strategic threat in the Asia-Pacific region. In September 2021, the United States, UK, and Australia announced the AUKUS initiative, intended specifically to counter China's growing military might in Asia. The initiative calls for an 18-month consultative period during which the parties are expected to select a design for a nuclear submarine for the Australian navy. While the submarine component of the agreement received the bulk of public attention, in part because of the consequent cancellation of a preexisting Australian commitment to purchase submarines from France, the scope of the initiative is potentially much broader. It includes looking at other military projects, such as unmanned undersea vessels, cyber technologies, artificial intelligence, and long-range missiles. On a political level, the three partners share both the threat perception of China and the need to deter Beijing's expansion in the region, including its use of force against Taiwan.

The groundbreaking AUKUS agreement of 2021, moreover, aims to "sustain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region" by improving the "interoperability, commonality, and mutual benefit" of AUKUS partners in order "to protect our shared values and promote security and prosperity" there.<sup>22</sup> Under its auspices, Australia is to acquire eight nuclear-powered attack submarines<sup>23</sup> and develop "cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies," and "additional undersea capabilities" in partnership with the British and Americans.<sup>24</sup> One open question with implications for deterring China is whether AUKUS could be expanded to include other regional states, such as Japan, who share a deep concern about China and the goal of deterring China from the use of force against Taiwan.

The English-speaking democracies of the "Five Eyes" relationship—the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand—have also built a deep collaborative culture over their decades of intelligence sharing and cooperative collection, which has been reported to include a division of labor for coverage of major portions of the world, including the Indo-Pacific.<sup>25</sup> As one recent history of that relationship describes things, the Five Eyes

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efforts to ensure that the Indo-Pacific is a region of peace, stability, and growing prosperity and economic inclusion."), available at <https://www.state.gov/the-united-states-and-india-deepening-our-strategic-partnership/>; and, Indian Ministry of External Affairs, "Brief on India-U.S. Relations" (June 2017) ("India-U.S. bilateral relations have developed into a 'global strategic partnership,' based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues."), available at [https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India\\_US\\_brief.pdf](https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_US_brief.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> The White House, "Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS" (September 15, 2021), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/09/15/joint-leaders-statement-on-aucus/>.

<sup>23</sup> See "Enter AUKUS," *The Economist* (September 25, 2021), pp. 17-18.

<sup>24</sup> "Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS," *op. cit.*

<sup>25</sup> See J. Vitor Tossini, "The Five Eyes – The Intelligence Alliance of the Anglosphere," *UKDJ* (April 14, 2020) ("alleging, in relevant part, that 'Britain monitors ... Hong Kong' Canada and the United States both monitor China, 'Australia is responsible for South and East Asia[,] and New Zealand for the South Pacific and Southeast Asia'"), available at <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/the-five-eyes-the-intelligence-alliance-of-the-anglosphere/>.



partnership now goes far deeper than just the technicalities and procedures of sharing information, having over the years led to the development of a “Five Eyes Enduring Culture” of “abiding professional loyalty” and sense of shared mission: “the Five Eyes have defined the strength of the values and commitment that underpin the essence of each nation’s sense of democracy and freedom in a very uncertain world.”<sup>26</sup>

The Five Eyes partnership is perhaps an unusually successful example of building thick connective tissue across national boundaries to help meet common threats—and an example, moreover, that has been able to take advantage of the commonalities of language, culture and history that exist within the so-called “Anglosphere” in ways that may not be replicable across the diverse nations of the Indo-Pacific. Nevertheless, Five Eyes illustrates the broader point that it *is* possible to build habits of extremely effective security-focused collaboration through networks of formal and informal cooperation. Inspired by this example, it should be the focus of U.S. regional foreign and security policy to build a cross-cutting latticework of mutually supporting relationships that over time can help weave the Indo-Pacific into a stronger cooperative fabric of security cooperation against Chinese threats.

This agenda should include a strong emphasis upon security sector capacity building. Such capacity building will be essential not merely in helping regional countries build autonomous national capabilities that will make them more resistant to Chinese coercion and more able to defend themselves against threats from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). It will also be essential in making regional forces more *interoperable*—augmenting their ability to work together, and with the United States, if they need to do so in some future crisis.

Beyond the limited multilateral security arrangements, U.S. defense agreements in the Indo-Pacific during the Cold War were based primarily on a set of bilateral defense treaties. The most prominent was—and remains—with Japan. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, signed in 1960, grants the United States the right to base military forces on Japanese territory and obligates the United States to come to the defense of Japan if it is attacked by a third party. During the Cold War, Japan’s contribution to a collective defense relationship was severely constrained by its pacifist national constitution, a constraint that continues, but with more flexibility today for Japan’s self-defense forces to act in the broader Indo-Pacific area.

Japan’s constitution was intentionally designed to prohibit the use of armed force in international disputes—a position that held with little change until the reforms of 2015. Those changes allow Tokyo to employ military force when an attack on a foreign country threatens Japan’s survival and also permit the deployment of forces for logistical support to foreign partners contributing to Japan’s security. Placed in the context of a Taiwan crisis, with the threat of an armed attack from mainland China, these changes take on strategic significance as reflected in recent statements by Japanese officials.

Japan’s official position, that Taiwan is part of China and Beijing is the legitimate Chinese authority, has not changed. Moreover, given that China is a major trading partner, Japan has much to lose economically if the Beijing-Tokyo relationship turns confrontational. Yet, Japanese leaders, including the deputy prime minister, have become increasingly vocal and clear that the defense of Taiwan is a vital national interest and that an attack on Taiwan is a

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony R. Wells, *Between Five Eyes: 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing* (Oxford: Casemate Publishers, 2020), p. 202.

threat to Japan's own security, perhaps signaling that an armed assault on the island would meet the required conditions for the use of military force by Japan against the attacker.

Different from Australia and Japan, the other U.S. bilateral treaty allies in the Asia-Pacific currently offer substantially less prospect for building defense and deterrent capabilities to counter the Chinese threat to Taiwan. The mutual defense treaty with Thailand, providing for the longest standing security relationship in the region, played an important role during the Cold War in the containment of China and in support of the U.S. war in Vietnam. In recent years, the relationship has continued to offer military benefits, including access and forward positioning for U.S. Air Force assets, and combined air combat training with Singapore. Yet, overall, the U.S.-Thai relationship has entered a period of atrophy, increasing doubt, and decline. The military coup and the turn toward authoritarianism in Bangkok have raised further questions about shared interests, especially as Thailand's military has looked increasingly to China for legitimacy and assistance. While the return to a more democratic government might offer the potential for greater defense cooperation, perhaps even extending to Taiwan, current circumstances give little room for optimism.

As with Thailand, other Asian treaty allies, including South Korea and the Philippines, have moved increasingly to balance or hedge their relations with the United States to avoid alienating China. This has resulted from both expanding trade relationships and from sustained and skillful Chinese policies, propaganda, and programs to neutralize U.S. alliance relationships throughout the region. While South Korea continues to place a high priority on maintaining U.S. troop presence to deter and defend against aggression from North Korea, Seoul under the Moon government sought to hedge against Chinese economic retaliation for actions ranging from U.S. missile defense deployments to criticisms of Beijing's human rights violations. While the United States continues to benefit from each of these alliance relationships, both politically and militarily, none would likely be willing to pay a high cost in the event of conflict over Taiwan or to support in any forceful way efforts to strengthen deterrence before the onset of a crisis or conflict.

Given the change in the ruling party in South Korea, however, the United States should reassess its opportunity to engage the Republic of Korea (ROK) in broader regional security issues such as Taiwan. The new president-elect, Yoon Suk Yeol, has expressed a desire to improve ties with the United States and to strengthen cooperation with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or "Quad," consisting, as noted above, of the United States, Australia, India, and Japan.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, when President Duterte leaves office, there may be more opportunities for the Philippines to play a more positive role in advocating the non-use of force against Taiwan by Beijing and perhaps even in re-building the once close, and at the time, critically important defense relationship with the United States, including Clark Air Force Base and Subic Bay Navy Base.

While not formally treaty allies, the United States has maintained a strong strategic partnership with Singapore, including deep security ties, providing U.S. military access to Singapore's air and naval bases. To a lesser degree, the United States is considered a close economic and, in some sectors, military partner with Malaysia. Yet, both countries have strong economic and cultural ties with China and have acted to hedge or balance their U.S.

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<sup>27</sup> Anthony Kuhn, "South Koreans vote political conservative as new president," *National Public Radio*, March 10, 2022, available at <https://www.npr.org/2022/03/10/1085680648/south-koreans-vote-political-conservative-as-new-president>.

and China relationships. At least under current circumstances, neither would likely be prepared to participate in activities that would be deemed overtly anti-Chinese, especially over the Taiwan Question. The same is probably the case for Indonesia, a country with even deeper suspicions of China than Singapore and Malaysia.

In contrast, the growing U.S. strategic relationship with Vietnam may offer substantive prospects for future joint security efforts to deter Chinese aggression in the South China Sea that could have broader implications affecting Beijing's Taiwan calculations. While encountering significant political and trade obstacles in recent years, the overall forward trajectory of the bilateral relationship has continued in both the economic and, to a lesser but still important degree, military spheres.

As with Vietnam, India may offer the prospect for closer security ties that could affect Chinese calculations over Taiwan. Sino-Indian relations continue to be influenced by long-standing border disputes, Chinese assistance to Pakistan, and rivalries in the South China Sea. India has long been considered a potentially important partner in countering the Chinese presence and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. For decades, Beijing and New Delhi have competed for influence in South Asia and have fought border wars that remain unresolved and subject to deadly flare-ups. U.S.-Indian economic, cultural, and political relations have grown substantially along with a comparatively modest expansion of military cooperation, including in the counterterrorism field. Yet, despite several major steps, such as the 2005 civil nuclear agreement, the hoped-for close strategic partnership with India has not yet materialized. India remains close to Russia in the defense field and China has become its largest trading partner. Nevertheless, there may be an opportunity for progress in the future given China's increasingly belligerent expansionism.

### **Strengthening Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific: Building the Messaging**

A victory denial deterrence strategy could be enhanced substantially by working with regional allies and partners, adding to the credibility of the deterrent message, and influencing China's perception of the likely costs and risks of military action against the collective capabilities of regional states opposed to Chinese aggression.<sup>28</sup> The deterrence message may best be strengthened by expanding our security dialogues and defense cooperation with key allies, including within an enlarged AUKUS framework, prospectively adding Japan. Established consultations with Australia and Japan and, when feasible with South Korea, at the Secretary of State and Defense levels, should put more specific focus on the deterrence of aggression against Taiwan. This same message should also be explicit in meetings at the heads of government level. As with the NATO experience, regular higher-level consultations on China's unprecedented nuclear buildup should seek to reassure allies and signal to Beijing the collective will of the alliance partners not to be coerced into conceding to aggression against Taiwan. Public summit-level statements and joint

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<sup>28</sup> Recent public comments indicate that Chinese leaders are, at some level, concerned about greater cooperation among U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific. For example, see, "China Warns U.S. Over Forming Pacific NATO, Backing Taiwan," *Bloomberg*, March 7, 2022, available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-07/china-urges-world-not-to-add-fuel-to-fire-in-war-in-ukraine>.

communiqués emphasizing allied resolve to act against the use of armed force may affect China's thinking about the potential costs of its actions.

The United States should also undertake a diplomatic campaign advocating a strong, public deterrent message with non-treaty regional partners. While recognizing the challenges mentioned earlier, the United States should seek in a series of bilateral talks to leverage long-standing security relationships with Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand to advance region-wide opposition to the use of force by China in the South and East China Seas, and against Taiwan. This diplomatic campaign should also extend to new partners, most notably, with Vietnam, but also perhaps with other states such as Malaysia and Indonesia. The first step could be to expand consultations on the nature of the Chinese military and economic threat similar to those currently conducted with close allies. In-depth threat briefings—in particular, to Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines—could improve general threat awareness and may serve as a starting point for closer political and military interactions.

The United States should also seek to promote the deterrent message in broader multilateral fora. Importantly, India's economic and political relations with Japan may have served to bring India closer to the United States and other allies in their goal of deterring Chinese aggression. Specifically, at Japan's initiative in 2007, India joined with Japan, the United States, and Australia in setting up the Quad, a multilateral forum for security consultations that has included combined military exercises. After a dormant period, the Quad was re-established in 2017 with the goal of countering China diplomatically and militarily in the South China Sea and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

The Quad has significant potential for strengthening the deterrent message to deter China from the use of armed force, including against Taiwan. The 2021 "Spirit of the Quad" joint statement called for a "rules based maritime order in the East and South China Seas" which members made clear was intended to counter Chinese claims and actions.<sup>29</sup> With skillful diplomacy, and perhaps with an expanded dialogue to include Vietnam and others, the United States may encourage the Quad to become a voice to help deter China from aggression.

To a lesser but perhaps still meaningful extent, this same political message of respect for international order and the non-use of force to settle disputes may be promoted within ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Given that ASEAN operates on the basis of consensus of its 10 members, and that some members, such as Cambodia and Myanmar are closely tied to China, there is no chance for a firm joint statement opposing by name China's use of force. Yet, the ASEAN Declaration calls for the promotion of regional peace and stability through respect for rule of law.<sup>30</sup> Although certainly on its own not likely to help deter China from aggression against Taiwan, an ASEAN open discussion opposing the use of force to settle disputes, perhaps led by Vietnam, may indirectly add more uncertainty to China's assessments of the cost of attacking Taiwan.

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<sup>29</sup> The White House, *Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: 'The Spirit of the Quad,'* March 12, 2021, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>.

<sup>30</sup> *The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration)*, August 8, 1967, available at <https://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20140117154159.pdf>.

## **Strengthening Deterrence: Backing the Message with Military Capabilities**

In addition to promoting the deterrent message through declaratory statements, the United States and select allies should take concrete military steps to demonstrate the resolve and the capability to act in the event of China's armed aggression. As noted earlier, for the United States this begins with the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act which codifies the U.S. commitment to assist Taiwan in maintaining its defense. The Act explicitly opposes unilateral changes to the status quo and insists on the peaceful resolution of differences between Beijing and Taipei.

Under the Act, and consistent with the long-standing goal of discouraging Taiwan from declaring independence, the United States may take steps to be less ambiguous about its commitment to defend Taiwan. Among the actions that could be considered, as discussed at length above, the United States could provide Taiwan with more advanced military capabilities to strengthen anti-access defenses and repel air and maritime attacks—raising the costs to China of any armed invasion.

Without the requisite forward deployment of naval and air forces in-being, the United States is unlikely to be effective in leading the allied effort to deter China. With such forces in place, however, the United States will be able to work with existing treaty allies to build their individual and collective military capabilities. Working with allies bilaterally and, for greatest effect, multilaterally, will entail a multistep approach over time. It will include everything from training and exercises, combined military planning, an integrated command structure, and joint operations. One early step may be conducting anti-access military exercises with Australia, the UK, and Japan in the waters and air space near Taiwan.

In particular, the key will be expanding political and military cooperation with Japan and Australia, the two treaty allies with substantial defense capabilities and the shared perception of China as the principal threat in the region. Both appear to accept that the first line of defense in countering the threat is deterrence of an attack on Taiwan. A failure of deterrence, and a successful takeover of the island, would change the overall power balance for a generation.

In addition to building ever closer defense relations with treaty allies through greater interoperability, operational exercises, and joint deployments, the United States can begin to lay the groundwork for a broader and more capable collective defense framework in the Asia-Pacific. While deep-seated historical and complex current political conditions still present a substantial challenge to this goal, as discussed above, the growing perception and reality of China's threat across the region may in time overcome these impediments sufficiently to permit the establishment of a future multilateral collective security structure. Perhaps accelerating this dynamic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has undermined the confidence of many Indo-Pacific states in the rules-based international order, making clear that authoritarian regimes will use armed force against weaker neighbors to achieve their goals. This change in perception may result in countries considering new options for their defense, including new collective security arrangements with the United States. The United States should build on this change to advance its objective of deterring China from invading Taiwan.

It has long been a U.S. priority to ensure that its allies and partners have the military technology and capabilities they need to defend themselves, but this has taken on a special



urgency as the comparatively benign post-Cold War security environment has given way to an era of uglier great power competitiveness.<sup>31</sup> With the White House's issuance of *National Security Presidential Memorandum 10* in 2018, for instance, extra emphasis was placed upon:

bolster[ing] the security of the United States and our allies and partners, including by defending against external coercion, countering terrorism, and providing capabilities in support of shared security objectives.<sup>32</sup>

Under the resulting new U.S. conventional arms transfer (CAT) policy, arms transfers, military training, and other capacity-building programs are key policy instruments for “enhancing partner capabilities in ways that support U.S. competitive strategy and interfere with our adversaries’ strategies”<sup>33</sup> by “improv[ing] and support[ing] our partners’ capabilities to directly counter PRC and Russian malign influence and aggression.”<sup>34</sup> As the United States in recent years has started to do in tailoring its arms sales to Taiwan to provide capabilities intended to make that island “indigestible” to the PLA and thus support a strategy of “denial” that will hopefully deter Chinese aggression<sup>35</sup>—and just as it has been willing to relax some traditional export control restrictions in order to facilitate helping its partners meet their security needs<sup>36</sup>—so, too, should the countries of the developed West support their Indo-Pacific partners in building the region’s military capacities and resilience in the face of authoritarian geopolitical revisionism.

This progress need not await some future moment in which the PLA’s threat to the region has become *so* terrifying that Indo-Pacific nations would set aside their current qualms about NATO-style collective security. Remembering that effective cooperation against shared security threats is less about formal legalities than about building and leveraging shared visions, values, and collaborative habits, there is much that the United States can do to build effective connective tissue across the Indo-Pacific through diverse, overlapping, cross-cutting bilateral and small-scale multilateral networks of security engagement and capacity-

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2017), pp. 2-3 (“China and Russia challenge American power, influence, and interests, attempting to erode American security and prosperity. ... These competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades – policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners.”), available at <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> *National Security Presidential Memorandum-10* (April 19, 2018), at § 2(a) (declaring this to be the first objective of U.S. arms transfer policy, available at <https://irp.fas.org/offdocs/nspm/nspm-10.pdf>).

<sup>33</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Ford, “Security Assistance and U.S. Competitive Strategy: Improving our Game,” *Arms Control and International Security Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (April 21, 2020), p. 2 (Emphasis deleted), available at <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/ce29b4c3/files/uploaded/ACIS%20Paper%203%20-%20Security%20Assistance%20and%20Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Ford, “Competitive Strategy vis-à-vis China and Russia: A View from the ‘T Suite,’” *Arms Control and International Security Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (May 11, 2020), p. 5, available at [https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/ce29b4c3/files/uploaded/ACIS%20Paper%206%20-%20T\\_%20Strategy.pdf](https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/ce29b4c3/files/uploaded/ACIS%20Paper%206%20-%20T_%20Strategy.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., Christopher A. Ford, *Defending Taiwan: Defense and Deterrence, Occasional Paper*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fairfax, VA: National Institute Press, 2022), pp. 22-24. See also, generally, Elbridge A. Colby, *The Strategy of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Ford, “The New U.S. Policy on UAS Exports: Responsibly Implementing the MTCR’s ‘Presumption of Denial,’” *Arms Control and International Security Papers*, Vol. 1, No. 13 (July 24, 2020), pp. 4-6, available at <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/ce29b4c3/files/uploaded/ACIS%20Paper%2013%20-%20MTCR%20Policy%20Reform.pdf>.

building support. Doing so, in turn, could provide a valuable contribution to an overarching victory denial deterrence strategy.

## Conclusion

To begin to build a more cohesive multilateral response to the China threat, the United States must exert consistent and competent leadership, integrating the main instruments of a comprehensive deterrence strategy directed at deterring against Chinese aggression. For deterrence of China to have the best chance of success, U.S. leadership with current and potential allies in the diplomatic, political, and military fields is essential. Close consultations, perhaps leading to an “Article V”-type security commitment with Australia and Japan, and increasingly integrated military planning and exercises, can make clear that deterrence is the first priority for key U.S. allies. A “latticework” approach to weaving webs of economic, trade, political, technological, cultural, academic, and other relationships among the democracies can play a powerful complementary role in building “connective tissue” among Indo-Pacific partners in ways that will, *by definition*, necessarily serve to undermine Beijing’s agenda of building a new global order around itself and CCP authoritarianism.

With sustained and credible U.S. leadership, China will have to plan on U.S. allies and partners responding collectively to aggression against Taiwan, raising the costs and uncertainties, and strengthening the prospects for a victory denial deterrence strategy.

## Recommendations

- Lay the groundwork for a broader and more capable collective defense framework in the Asia-Pacific.
- Explore opportunities for deepening existing, and creating alternative alliance/partnership structures, both multilateral and bilateral, that include a commitment to Taiwan’s autonomy and the peaceful resolution of its future status. If the United States and its allies fully exploit these opportunities, it could increase the prospects for successfully deterring Chinese aggression.
- Focus U.S. regional foreign and security policy on building a cross-cutting latticework of separate and distinct, but mutually supporting, relationships that over time can help weave the Indo-Pacific into a stronger cooperative fabric of security cooperation against Chinese threats. Emphasize security sector capacity-building.
- Engage the Republic of Korea (ROK) in broader regional security issues such as Taiwan, as the new president-elect, Yoon Suk Yeol, has expressed a desire to improve ties with the United States and to strengthen cooperation with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad.”
- Consider ways to expand the U.S. strategic relationship with Vietnam. This may offer substantive prospects for future joint security efforts to deter Chinese aggression in the South China Sea that could have broader implications affecting Beijing’s Taiwan calculations.

- Expand U.S. security dialogues and defense cooperation with key allies, including within an enlarged Australia-UK-United States (AUKUS) framework, prospectively adding Japan.
- Initiate regular higher-level consultations on China’s unprecedented nuclear buildup, along with public summit-level statements and joint communiqués emphasizing allied resolve to act against the use of armed force, including any aggression against Taiwan.
- Undertake a diplomatic campaign advocating a strong, public deterrent message with non-treaty regional partners, including Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand, to forge region-wide opposition to the use of force by China in the South and East China Seas, and against Taiwan. Seek to promote the deterrent message in broader multilateral fora, such as the Quad and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- Expand consultations on the nature of the Chinese military and economic threat similar to those currently conducted with close allies. In-depth threat briefings—in particular, to Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and the Philippines—could improve general threat awareness and may serve as a starting point for closer political and military interactions.
- Expand joint exercises with Taiwan and other U.S. allies, beginning with an invitation to Taiwan to participate in some way in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise.
- Consider forward deployment of U.S. naval and air forces, and conducting anti-access military exercises with Australia, the UK, and Japan in the waters and air space near Taiwan.
- Expand political and military cooperation with Japan and Australia, the two treaty allies with substantial defense capabilities and the shared perception of China as the principal threat in the region. Close consultations, perhaps leading to an “Article V”-type security commitment with Australia and Japan, and increasingly integrated military planning and exercises, can make clear that deterrence is the first priority for key U.S. allies.

