

NATO and a Taiwan contingency

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At a time of growing concern about the threat to Taiwan's security from the People's Republic of China (PRC), NATO has been increasingly concerned with developments in the Indo-Pacific.¹ A contingency over Taiwan would not only have a devastating impact on the global economy, but also have the potential to involve the United States in a direct conflict with a near-peer (and nuclear-armed) competitor.² US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has emphasized the connection – and indeed the interdependence – of security in Europe and security in the Indo-Pacific:

¹ Sara Bjerg Moller, "NATO Is Entering a New Phase in the Indo-Pacific," *Atlantic Council*, 6 February 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/nato-is-entering-a-new-phase-in-the-indo-pacific/>

² Taipei Times, "China Would Choose War if 'Peaceful Unification' Impossible, US Officials Say," *Taipei Times*, 11 March 2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2023/03/11/2003795923>

Summary

This paper

Discusses the conditions under which a Taiwan contingency could trigger Article 5.

Explains how individual NATO countries already play a role in Taiwan's security.

Outlines scenarios under which individual NATO countries could become directly involved in a Taiwan contingency.

We are also growing the connective tissue between US alliances in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe...allies in the Indo-Pacific are staunch supporters of Ukraine, while allies in Europe are helping the United States support peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.³

This paper outlines the scenarios under which a Taiwan contingency could affect the Alliance, both in the legal sense of a triggering action for Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty and in the political sense of how the United States might ask for the support of its NATO Allies in a global campaign against Beijing. What is the scope for NATO to become involved in a Taiwan contingency under its existing commitments, and what might that involvement look like? The first section discusses the legal basis for NATO to act in a Taiwan contingency. The second section discusses the operational scenarios in which the United States and Taiwan could ask for NATO support, including a scenario-building exercise of how a conflict could begin. The concluding section discusses the policy implications of this analysis.

The Legal Scope for NATO to Respond to a Taiwan Contingency

There is limited but discernible scope for an invocation of Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty in the event of a Taiwan contingency. Article 6 states that Article 5 can be invoked when there is an armed attack:

- on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France, on the territory of Turkey or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer;
- on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.⁴

For ease (and clarity) of reference, this article will refer to the first bullet point as contingency 1 and the second bullet point as contingency 2.⁵ Contingency 1 consists of four disjunctive phrases:

1. on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America,
2. on the Algerian Departments of France,
3. on the territory of Turkey,
4. or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.

The first phrase warrants particular scrutiny. It defines the scope of Article 5 as including the *territory* of any of the Parties in North America (whereas the fourth phrase refers to islands under their *jurisdiction* in the specified area). The salient issue is whether or not the geographic scope of a contingency over Taiwan could expand to North America. A recent wargame by the Center for a New American Studies that simulated a Taiwan contingency found that “Red [China] wanted to target military installations in the continental United States, but did not have the forces to do so.”⁶ A summary of the results for NBC News’s *Meet the Press* clarified that this involved Chinese missile strikes against Hawaii, Alaska, and California (and even escalated to a PRC detonation of a nuclear weapon in the atmosphere off the coast of California).⁷ The wargame found that a Taiwan contingency was far more protracted, and led to far greater escalation, than either the United States or China anticipated.⁸ While this was only a simulation, and while China did not prove capable of carrying out all of the missile strikes in the simulation, it still reinforces the point that a contingency over Taiwan could lead to a PRC attack on Hawaii and the west coast of the United States. With China having recently conducted a joint patrol with Russia off the coast of Alaska, this scenario is becoming increasingly plausible.⁹

An attack against any part of the continental United States would clearly be an attack on North America, and hence would trigger Article 5. But an attack against Hawaii would be more ambiguous. While the United States is a country in North America, Hawaii’s designation is not clear. The UN Statistics Division includes the whole of the United States in its definition of “Northern America” (which, along with the Caribbean and Central America, is part of “North America”).¹⁰ 26 US Code § 274 (h)(3)(A) defines the “North American area” as “the United States,

³ Jake Sullivan, “The Sources of American Power: A Foreign Policy for a Changed World,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2023), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/sources-american-power-biden-jake-sullivan>

⁴ North Atlantic Treaty [4 April 1949], *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 10 April 2019, NATO - Official text: The North Atlantic Treaty, 04 April 1949. A note in the source text indicates that the application of the Treaty to the “Algerian Departments of France” ceased to be effective as of 3 July 1962.

⁵ Writing for the *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Andrew Erskine argues that the “the treaty only encompasses members located within the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.” Andrew Erskine, “The Western Flank: The Geosecurity Periphery NATO Forgot It Had,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, Air University Press*, 14 March 2022, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2964827/the-western-flank-the-geosecurity-periphery-nato-forgot-it-had>. This interpretation is overly restrictive.

⁶ Stacie Pettyjohn, Becca Wasser, and Chris Dougherty, “Dangerous Straits: Wargaming a Future Conflict over Taiwan,” *Center for a New American Security*, June 2022, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/CNAS+Report-Dangerous+Straits-Defense-Jun+2022-FINAL-print.pdf>, 6.

⁷ NBC News, “War Games: The Battle for Taiwan,” *YouTube*, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYfvm-JLhPQ>, 14:00-14:20.

⁸ Stacie Pettyjohn, Becca Wasser, and Chris Dougherty, “Dangerous Straits: Wargaming a Future Conflict over Taiwan,” *Center for a New American Security*, June 2022, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/CNAS+Report-Dangerous+Straits-Defense-Jun+2022-FINAL-print.pdf>, 1.

⁹ Michael R. Gordon and Nancy A. Youssef, “Russia and China Sent Large Naval Patrol Near Alaska,” *Wall Street Journal*, 6 August 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-and-china-sent-large-naval-patrol-near-alaska-127de28b>

¹⁰ Statistics Division, “Methodology: Geographic Region,” *United Nations*, 2023, <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/#qa>

its possessions, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and Canada and Mexico.”¹¹ This is an expansive definition, which, if applied to the North Atlantic Treaty, means that Article 5 could be invoked in the event of an armed attack on Hawaii and even Guam. In 2017, Sir Alan Duncan (then the UK Minister of State for Europe and the Americas) stated the following during questioning in the House of Commons:

Article 6 of the Washington Treaty defines the geographical scope of Article 5 primarily as ‘the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America’ or ‘islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic Area north of the Tropic of Cancer.’ However, any attack against the United States, whether directed against Hawaii, Guam, or another US state or territory, is likely to be part of a major conflict. In such a case, either the consultation provisions of Article 4 or the collective defence provisions of Article 5 would plainly apply, and the decision of the North Atlantic Council would determine the response of the Alliance.¹²

The fact that a senior official in the British government – which has sent RAF pilots to train with their US and Australian counterparts in Exercise Red Flag to simulate a coordinated air campaign against the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force – endorsed this interpretation of Articles 4, 5, and 6 is itself significant.¹³

But there are also reasons to doubt that NATO would be directly involved in a Taiwan contingency. 26 US Code § 274 (h)(3)(A) is not necessarily applicable to the North Atlantic Treaty, since it specifies the scope of the definition above as being applicable to Subsection (h) of 26 US Code § 274 (which regulates the relatively mundane matter of “Attendance at Conventions, Etc.”). Moreover, in 1965, the NATO Secretariat issued a legal opinion stating that Article 5 and Article 6 of the Treaty would not apply to Hawaii because it became a part of the Union as a US “state” rather than a US “territory.”¹⁴ The reasoning in this legal opinion is debatable: the reference to “the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America” in Article 6 does not exclude US states (and it seems reasonable to suppose that if the Treaty applies to US territories, then it should apply *a fortiori* to US states as well). The real

issue is whether or not Hawaii can be considered a part of North America.¹⁵

Even if a PRC attack on Hawaii does trigger Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the scope of action on the part of the Allies would be relatively limited. The North Atlantic Treaty is distinctive in that Article 5 specifies the outcome or end state that Allied action is meant to achieve: “to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.”¹⁶ This means that in the event of an armed attack on North America, the parties would not be obligated to assist the United States in the Indo-Pacific. Instead, they would be required to maintain the security of the North Atlantic area, likely in the context of a significant redeployment of US assets out of theatre, and possibly in the face of Russian probing actions to test the readiness of the Alliance. To prevent escalation in the Israel-Hamas conflict, the United States deployed the *USS Dwight D. Eisenhower* and its carrier strike group to the Central Command’s area of responsibility shortly after they were deployed to European Command’s area of responsibility.¹⁷ In a Taiwan contingency, this would happen on a much larger scale, creating pressure on NATO to respond on short notice. The outcome may be similar to the mobilization of NATO after the Korean War, which was designed to prevent Moscow and its satellites from opening a second front in Europe.¹⁸

Military Operations in a Taiwan Contingency

It will be apparent from this analysis of the North Atlantic Treaty that the legal scope for NATO involvement in a Taiwan contingency depends critically on the extent of the battlespace. If hostilities are confined to the immediate vicinity of Taiwan or the First Island Chain, then a trigger for Article 5 is unlikely. If hostilities escalate and the fighting extends to the Third Island Chain, then a trigger for Article 5 is possible. If the hostilities escalate further and the fighting extends to the continental United States (or Canada), then a trigger for Article 5 is certain. Therefore, NATO cannot exclude the possibility of involvement in the defence of Taiwan, as a spokesperson for the Elysée

¹¹ “26 US Code § 274 – Disallowance of certain entertainment, etc., expenses,” *Legal Information Institute, Cornell Law School*, accessed 7 September 2023, 26 US Code § 274 - Disallowance of certain entertainment, etc., expenses, US Code, US Law, LII / Legal Information Institute, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/26/274#h_3_A

¹² “Guam and Hawaii: NATO [10 October 2017]”, *UK Parliament: Written Questions, Answers and Statements*, 2023, <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2017-10-10/106917>

¹³ Keiran Southern, “On Board with the RAF as Allied Fighter Jets Rehearse for War with China,” *The Times*, 9 February 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/raf-allied-fighter-jets-nevada-desert-war-china-taiwan-m7lsc9wkp>

¹⁴ C.L. Sulzberger, “Foreign Affairs: NATO and the Hawaiian Eye,” *The New York Times*, 18 June 1965, <https://www.nytimes.com/1965/06/18/archives/foreign-affairs-nato-and-the-hawaiian-eye.html?searchResultPosition=4>

¹⁵ For a sceptical opinion on the applicability of Article 5 to Hawaii, see Bruno Tertrais, “Article 5 of the Washington Treaty: Its Origins, Meaning, and Future,” *Research Paper* 130, NATO Defense College, (2016), 6. For an argument that NATO should cover Hawaii, see Andrew Erskine, “The Western Flank: The Geosecurity Periphery NATO Forgot It Had,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, Air University Press*, 14 March 2022, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2964827/the-western-flank-the-geosecurity-periphery-nato-forgot-it-had>.

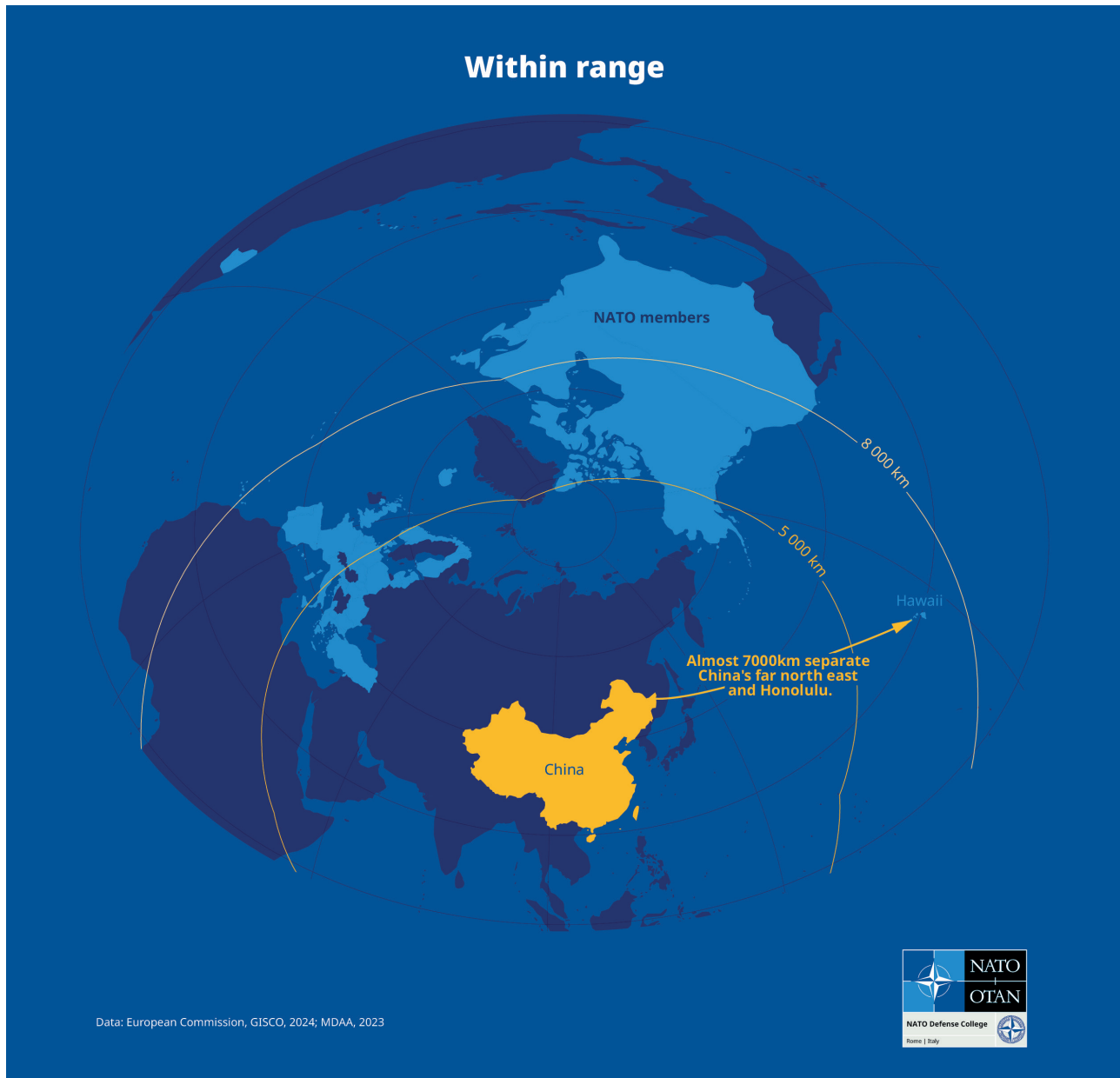
¹⁶ “North Atlantic Treaty [4 April 1949]”, *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 10 April 2019, NATO - Official text: The North Atlantic Treaty, 04-Apr.-1949

¹⁷ Carrier Strike Group 2 Public Affairs, “Dwight D. Eisenhower Departs on Deployment,” *Commander, US 2nd Fleet*, 14 October 2023, <https://www.c2f.usff.navy.mil/Press-Room/News-Stories/Article/3557509/dwight-d-eisenhower-departs-on-deployment/>; Lloyd J. Austin III, “Statement from Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Steps to Increase Force Posture,” *US Department of Defense*, 21 October 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/3564874/statement-from-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-steps-to-increase-for/>

¹⁸ Lawrence S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 9-10.

Figure 1: Chinese missile reach

Source: European Commission, GISCO; MDA, 2023



Palace recently suggested in claiming that the scope of NATO was restricted to the North Atlantic.¹⁹ A conflict between the United States and China in the Western Pacific could put North America at risk of armed attack, requiring NATO to be prepared as soon as the conflict starts.

According to the US Department of Defense, the scenarios under which Beijing might use force against Taiwan include the following:²⁰

- “Air and maritime blockade”
- “Limited force or coercive options”
- “Air and missile campaign”
- “Amphibious invasion of Taiwan”
- “Small island seizure”

With the exception of “limited force or coercive options”, these scenarios are not mutually exclusive. Beijing might plan for an amphibious invasion of Taiwan by first

¹⁹ Stuart Lau and Laura Kayali, “Macron Blocks NATO Outpost in Japan amid Chinese Complaints,” *Reuters*, 7 July 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-block-nato-outpost-japan-china-complaints/>. As discussed above, this claim does not find support in a close reading of the text of the North Atlantic Treaty, which defines the scope of NATO’s responsibilities as including Europe and North America. The “North Atlantic” has been interpreted broadly in accordance with the political interests of NATO’s member states since the beginning of the history of the alliance. See Lawrence Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport: Praeger, 2004), 3.

²⁰ US Department of Defense, “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China, 2023: Annual Report to Congress,” *US Department of Defense*, 2023, <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/19/2003323409/-1/-1/1/2023-MILITARY-AND-SECURITY-DEVELOPMENTS-INVOLVING-THE-PEOPLES-REPUBLIC-OF-CHINA.PDF>, 140-142

imposing an air and maritime blockade, and an amphibious invasion of Taiwan does not preclude the possibility that Beijing might first try to seize Taiwan's outlying islands in order to test Taiwanese and US capabilities and resolve. Therefore, even though the legal analysis above mainly considers scenarios involving a full-scale invasion by the PLA, the other scenarios could also have implications for NATO. For example, if Beijing attempts to impose an air and maritime blockade on Taiwan, the United States could come under pressure to redeploy its assets out of the area of responsibility of European Command to support forces in the area of responsibility of Indo-Pacific Command. The United States could also call on its NATO Allies to impose sanctions against China, just as they imposed sanctions against Russia after the invasion of Ukraine.²¹

Individual NATO countries could also be directly involved in a Taiwan contingency even if the Alliance does not engage in a formal consultation under Article 4. With NATO countries engaging in regular naval patrols of the Indo-Pacific region in recent years, they could be asked by the United States or Taiwan to provide support in the event of hostilities with Beijing.²² Short of becoming combatants themselves, this support could involve assisting the US and Taiwanese navies to break a blockade, or helping Taiwan to evacuate its citizens from its outlying islands.²³ And NATO countries must consider the possibility that Beijing will target naval assets that they may have deployed in the Indo-Pacific at the start of a contingency. Beijing has already criticized proposals for a NATO liaison office in Japan as an attempt at “inciting bloc confrontation”.²⁴ If the Chinese Communist Party considers Allied warships in the Indo-Pacific to be an extension of the US Pacific Fleet, there is a risk that the PLA will launch indiscriminate attacks against Western naval forces in and around the Taiwan Strait. This risk was highlighted in June 2023, when a Chinese warship carried out a dangerous manoeuvre by crossing in front of a US destroyer, nearly causing a collision, during a joint naval exercise between the United States and Canada in the Taiwan Strait.²⁵ Even if NATO as an alliance is not at war with China during a Taiwan contingency, NATO members very well could be.

A contingency could begin with little warning. John Culver's analysis of how Beijing might prepare for a conflict suggests that the signs would be clear well in advance of

the start of hostilities, but that is only under the amphibious invasion scenario.²⁶ There would be much less advance warning of an air and missile campaign, and still less warning of a blockade. And even under the amphibious invasion scenario, Beijing might decide that taking months or years to mobilize its forces would also give the United States time to mobilize its own forces, leading the PLA Rocket Force to engage in an opening salvo by launching missile strikes against Western naval forces in the Indo-Pacific. Even if Beijing does not decide to embark on an amphibious invasion, it might impose a blockade by suddenly designating the whole of Taiwan and its territorial waters as off limits to shipping and air traffic, backed by the threat of force. It would then be the task of Taiwan's Armed Forces, and potentially the US Seventh Fleet, to break the blockade before Taiwan runs out of munitions, fuel, food, and other critical supplies. This might involve providing a naval escort to civilian tankers and relief ships. If the United States decides to intervene, it might also airlift supplies from bases in Japan and the Philippines to airfields in Taipei, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. NATO countries operating in the Indo-Pacific (such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada) might be asked to play a supporting role in these operations. Even if they are not, they would have to come to a decision on whether to comply with Beijing's blockade and sacrifice their right to freedom of navigation, or to challenge the blockade at the risk of a military confrontation.

Policy Implications

Given the fact that NATO countries still have a limited ability to project power in the Indo-Pacific, they are likely to play a supporting role in a Taiwan contingency. The demands of a kinetic conflict with a near-peer competitor will create pressure on the United States to concentrate its assets in the Indo-Pacific, especially if the conflict is protracted.²⁷ Under those circumstances, it will be critical for the other members of NATO to maintain the requisite force posture to compensate for the reduced US commitment.²⁸ If European Allies cannot maintain a credible deterrent without the United States, then two scenarios could

²¹ On the potential for sanctions against China in the event of a Taiwan contingency, see Ben Blanchard, Yimou Lee, John O'Donnell, Alexandra Alper, and Trevor Hunnicutt, “Exclusive: US Weighs China Sanctions to Deter Taiwan Action, Taiwan Presses EU,” *Reuters*, 14 September 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/exclusive-us-considers-china-sanctions-deter-taiwan-action-taiwan-presses-eu-2022-09-13/>; and Charlie Vest and Agatha Kratz, “Sanctioning China in a Taiwan Crisis: Scenarios and Risks”, *Atlantic Council*, 21 June 2023, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/sanctioning-china-in-a-taiwan-crisis-scenarios-and-risks/>

²² William R. Hawkins, “NATO Navies Send Strategic Signals in the Indo-Pacific,” *US Naval Institute*, August 2022, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2022/august/nato-navies-send-strategic-signals-indo-pacific>

²³ On the need for naval support during an evacuation of the outlying islands, see James Lee, “What the Taiwan Relations Act Really Means for US Policy,” *Global Asia* 17, no. 3 (2022): 20-23, https://globalasia.org/v17no3/cover/what-the-taiwan-relations-act-really-means-for-us-policy_james-lee

²⁴ Stuart Lau and Laura Kayali, “Macron Blocks NATO Outpost in Japan amid Chinese Complaints,” *Reuters*, 7 July 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/emmanuel-macron-block-nato-outpost-japan-china-complaints/>

²⁵ Reuters, “Chinese Warship Passed in ‘Unsafe Manner’ Near Destroyer in Taiwan Strait, US Says,” *Reuters*, 4 June 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/chinese-warship-passed-unsafe-manner-near-us-destroyer-taiwan-strait-us-2023-06-04/>

²⁶ John Culver, “How We Would Know When China Is Preparing to Invade Taiwan,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 3 October 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/10/03/how-we-would-know-when-china-is-preparing-to-invade-taiwan-pub-88053>

²⁷ On the risk of a protracted war, see Hal Brands and Michael Beckley, “Washington Is Preparing for the Wrong War with China,” *Foreign Affairs*, 16 December 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2021-12-16/washington-preparing-wrong-war-china>

²⁸ This will be a significant challenge, because Europe is still far from achieving strategic autonomy, as Hugo Meijer and Stephen Brooks have argued. Hugo Meijer and Stephen Brooks, “Illusions of Autonomy: Why Europe Cannot Provide for Its Security If the United States Pulls Back”, *International Security* 45, no. 4 (2021): 7-43

unfold: the concentration of US assets in the Indo-Pacific could create a window of vulnerability in Europe that Russia would seek to exploit; or the United States, wary of creating an opening for further Russian aggression, would have its hands tied in Europe and be unable to wage a conflict against China in the Taiwan Strait. NATO can contribute to peace and security in the Taiwan Strait by being prepared to hold the line in Europe while the United States is engaged in the Indo-Pacific, thereby preventing the opening of a second front.

NATO can also contribute to the security of Taiwan by supporting US efforts to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself. For example, it was recently reported that the United States has agreed to help Taiwan upgrade its tactical data link from Link-16 to NATO's Link-22, leading analysts to infer that the United States had succeeded in securing approval from other NATO countries.²⁹ Individual NATO countries have also supplied key components and technologies to Taiwan's military. The UK government has authorized British companies to export submarine components and technology to Taiwan, which recently deployed its first indigenous submarine.³⁰ GEOSAT Aerospace and Technology, a Taiwanese firm, has recently reached an agreement to acquire JACKAL drones (which are capable of deploying Thales Lightweight Multirole Missiles) produced by the Turkish company Fly BVLOS through Flyby Technology, a UK company.³¹ French and Taiwanese companies have signed an agreement to jointly manufacture surveillance drones, which has the potential for positive spillover effects as Taiwan seeks to manufacture its own drones.³² These examples point to the existing involvement of NATO countries in Taiwan's defence economy. While these forms of assistance may be modest in comparison with US arms sales to Taiwan, they can still enhance Taiwan's level of preparedness for a contingency.

Three sets of policy implications follow from this analysis. First, the United States should consider engaging in contingency planning with its NATO Allies to determine plausible scenarios for a US conflict with China in the Taiwan Strait, the operational and tactical requirements that

those scenarios would impose on the United States' force posture, and the capacity of NATO Allies to "backfill" for the United States in Europe. Second, NATO should consider conducting feasibility studies of how the Alliance might respond to a Taiwan contingency under various scenarios and at varying levels of escalation, including an attack on North America that would trigger Article 5. The focus of these studies might range from sanctions against China to joint operations in the Indo-Pacific. Third, NATO should consider having a process in place for coordinating the transfer of weapons systems and military technology to Taiwan, to ensure that actions taken by individual member states are congruent with an overarching concept for Taiwan's defence posture. There has already been apparent coordination between the United States and the United Kingdom on the transfer of technology to aid in the development of Taiwan's submarine programme, and this coordination should be institutionalized at the NATO level.³³

The North Atlantic Treaty provides a legal mandate for these actions. Article 4 states that "the Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is *threatened*" (emphasis added). There is no scope-of-application provision that restricts this consultation to developments in Europe or North America (Article 6, which does specify a geographic scope, applies "for the purpose of Article 5" without mentioning Article 4).³⁴ Moreover, Article 4 can be invoked whenever there is a perceived threat, and not only after the occurrence of an armed attack. The US Department of Defense has identified the People's Republic of China as its "pacing challenge" and a Taiwan contingency as the "pacing scenario".³⁵ This means that Washington considers Beijing to be a threat to its security, especially in the context of a Taiwan contingency. Therefore, the United States can ask for a consultation of the Parties to NATO under Article 4 to decide on how to respond to Beijing's threat to Taiwan.

29 Matt Yu and Ko Lin, "US to Help Taiwan Obtain NATO Link-22 Radio System: Defense Official", *Focus Taiwan: CNA English News*, 25 May 2023, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202305250018>

30 Andrew Macaskill and Elizabeth Piper, "Exclusive: UK Approves Increased Submarine-Related Exports to Taiwan, Angering China," *Reuters*, 13 March 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-approves-increased-submarine-related-exports-taiwan-risking-angering-china-2023-03-13/>; Tessa Wong, "Haikun: Taiwan Unveils New Submarine to Fend Off China," *BBC News*, 28 September 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66932808>

31 Tayfun Ozberk, "Taiwan Moves Closer to Acquiring 160 Turkish-Made Jackal Drones," *Defense News*, 22 September 2023, <https://www.defensenews.com/unmanned/2023/09/22/taiwan-moves-closer-to-acquiring-160-turkish-made-jackal-drones/>

32 Keoni Everington, "Taiwan and France Sign Spy Drone Partnership Deal," *Taiwan News*, 26 April 2023, [https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4874730#:~:text=TAIPEI%20\(Taiwan%20News\)%20%E2%80%94%20Taiwanese,red%20supply%20chain%20from%20China.](https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4874730#:~:text=TAIPEI%20(Taiwan%20News)%20%E2%80%94%20Taiwanese,red%20supply%20chain%20from%20China.)

33 Richard Spencer, "Taiwan Launches 'Sea Monster' Submarine to Counter China Threat," *The Times*, 26 September 2023, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/taiwan-launches-sea-monster-submarine-to-counter-china-threat-c36dkjpf5>

34 "North Atlantic Treaty [4 April 1949]," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, 10 April 2019, NATO - Official text: The North Atlantic Treaty, 04 April 1949.

35 Jim Garamone, "Defense Official Says Indo-Pacific Is the Priority Theater; China is DOD's Pacing Challenge," *Department of Defense News*, 9 March 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2961183/defense-official-says-indo-pacific-is-the-priority-theater-china-is-dods-pacing/>

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