

**2020 Policy Recommendations**  
Friends of Lee Teng-Hui Association in Japan  
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**For the Protection of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific,  
Japan Together with the US and Australia  
Should Support Nations that Have Diplomatic Relations with Taiwan**

**Main Point:**

On September 16 and 20, 2019, the Pacific island nations of the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, which had maintained official diplomatic relations with the Republic of China in Taiwan, successively severed those relations and shortly afterward established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. This is a matter that goes beyond a reduction in the number of nations that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan and a constriction of that country's international living space. It is China's blatant challenge to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision (Strategy) proposed by Prime Minister Abe and declared by President Trump as an international strategy, wielded like an axe by China for the purpose of dividing Japan, the United States and Australia.

China is using Pacific island nations as the board to play a challenging “reversi game” against Japan, the United States, and Australia. The nations that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan are game pieces that China is flipping one by one, aiming to grasp a “definitive corner piece,” Taiwan, that decides the game. In order to block President Xi Jinping's effort to turn the Pacific into a “Chinese Ocean”, which is "China's Dream," and instead keep the Pacific an ocean of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law, Japan must join with the United States, Australia and other countries to support those nations that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan and in this

way prevent China from making Taiwan its victim. Japan, the United States and Australia must protect that one piece called Taiwan in this reversi game, support the countries that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and must clear away China's influence from the entire Pacific Ocean region, imbuing it instead with the features of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

## **Recommendations:**

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe set out the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision in his keynote address at the Conference on African Development on August 27, 2016. There Prime Minister Abe spoke forcefully and vowed that "Japan bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous."

As though in response to these words, President Trump spoke at the APEC venue in Vietnam on November 20, 2017, about his "vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific" where sovereign and independent nations could all prosper side-by-side.

The perception in America is that China has reaped the benefits of free markets, justice, and the rule of law to experience growth, but it is China that is undermining the rules-based international system ("Department of Defense Indo-Pacific Strategy Report" of June 1, 2019).

For the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region, the United States government and Congress are seeking to realize a still stronger partnership with Taiwan as well as good-faith implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act. The Trump administration, which initially appeared somewhat disinclined to engage with the Pacific island nations, has also announced its intention to further enhance its engagement there. In addition to strengthening its relationships of cooperation with Japan and Australia as its key allies within the region, the United States has declared that it will take measures to resolve its issues with the Pacific island nations and Taiwan (US Department of State, "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision," November 4, 2019).

Following the *Liaoning*, China has built three domestically produced aircraft carriers. With the aim of creating a blue-water navy, China is bringing adjacent seas into its sphere of influence and advancing beyond that country's so-called first island chain all the way into the western Pacific. By severing the Solomon Islands and Kiribati from Taiwan, China is further seeking to bring those Pacific island nations into its own sphere of influence. This is a clear manifestation of the Chinese Communist regime's intent to reach beyond the so-called second island chain all the way to the third island chain.

The reckless remarks made by a retired PLA Navy's Admiral about wanting to divide the Pacific Ocean west of Hawaii into two halves, and bring the western half into the Chinese

sphere of influence, is becoming a reality. Judging by the trend to date, China's next targets among the Pacific island nations will probably turn out to be the Marshall Islands and Palau. What will then remain are just the small nations of Nauru and Tuvalu. These very few remaining nations that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan are situated on sea lanes that link Hawaii, Oceania, Guam, and Saipan with Okinawa and Taiwan in a manner that is critical for regional maritime security. They are lifelines that sustain the bonds between Japan, the United States, Australia, and Taiwan. [Note 1, Note 2]

In an important speech given on January 2, 2019, at a "Commemoration of the 40th Anniversary of China's Message to Compatriots in Taiwan," President Xi Jinping proclaimed unification with Taiwan on the "one country, two systems" approach taken in Hong Kong. Although without openly naming the United States or other countries, he stated that "We make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means" to that end. China does not deny that it might move to exercise force with respect to actions seeking independent sovereignty by the people in Taiwan, who are actually in the majority, as well as with respect to assistance from American and other outsiders. Instead, China's goal is not only to swallow up Taiwan. Beyond that, it is to take possession of half the Pacific Ocean.

Today's actions by the Trump administration indicate an effort to address the situation out of a sense of crisis. This is based on the awareness stated in the National Security Strategy of the United States of America (December 2017) that "China seeks to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region." The Japanese government must also come to grips with the harsh realization that the reversi game being played around the Pacific truly is being advanced move by move to China's advantage.

In order to block China's designs and maintain a Free and Open Indo-Pacific, it will be necessary to hold back further penetration by China into the Pacific island nations, further increases in its coercion, further expansion of its influence. Accomplishing that will require Japan to act together with the United States, Australia and other countries to concentrate our full resources on upholding those nations that have diplomatic relations with Taiwan. At the same time, maximum effort must be focused and even more energy applied so that all the Pacific island nations can develop as countries enjoying freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

As it happens, this year is when the Japan's Ministry of Defense (JMOD) is inviting defense ministers from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Tonga, which are the Pacific island nations with armed forces, as well as the other representatives from the Pacific island nations, to come to Tokyo together with officials from the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, France and other countries having close ties with Pacific island nations for an exchange of views regarding security issues. The event will take place as the Japan Pacific Islands Defense

Dialogue 2020: Bridging the Blue Continent (JPIDD). This will be the first time for the JMOD to host the event, and it is earnestly to be hoped that JMOD will lead the participants with a perspective like this.

Note 1. Countries having diplomatic relations with Taiwan as of May 2016 (the start of Tsai Ing-wen's administration): 22 countries

Oceania: Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu

Africa: Sao Tome and Principe, Burkina Faso, Swaziland (Eswatini)

Central and South America: El Salvador, Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Paraguay

Europe: Vatican

Note 2. Countries having diplomatic relations with Taiwan as of March 2020: 15 countries

Oceania: Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Tuvalu

Africa: Eswatini

Central and South America: Belize, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Paraguay

Europe: Vatican

Friends of Lee Teng-Hui Association in Japan  
"2020 Policy Proposal" Reference Material

## The Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision and Other Countries' Perception and Legislation

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe publicly announced the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific in his keynote address at the Sixth Conference on African Development in August 2016. Prime Minister Abe stated that “what will give stability and prosperity to the world is none other than the enormous liveliness brought forth through the union of two free and open oceans (the Pacific and Indian Oceans) and two continents (Asia and Africa).” He also declared that “Japan bears the responsibility of fostering the confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans and of Asia and Africa into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and the market economy, free from force or coercion, and making it prosperous.” (1)

At the next year's ASEAN Summit Meeting, the leaders of other nations also made reference to this. At the APEC Summit Meeting in November 2017, President Trump of the United States also indicated alignment with this vision.

Prime Minister Abe's vision sets forth three key pillars for the realization of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. They are (1) promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc. (2) pursuit of economic prosperity (improving connectivity and strengthening economic partnership including EPA/FTAs and investment treaties); and (3) commitment for peace and stability (capacity building on maritime law enforcement, HA/DR cooperation, etc.). He cites various initiatives for cooperation to bring about substantive realization of the third pillar, the commitment for peace and stability. These include capacity-building assistance to countries in the Indo-Pacific region (e.g. strengthening capacity of maritime law enforcement and Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), and other human resource development) and cooperation in such fields as HA/DR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief), anti-piracy, counter-terrorism, and non-proliferation. (2)

In Taiwan, President Tsai Ing-wen presented a response to this Abe Vision on October 10, 2019. In an address titled "Nation of Resilience, Forward into the World" given at the National Day celebration of the 108th anniversary of the Republic of China, the president made her position clear by referring to Taiwan's geopolitical importance to the Indo-Pacific vision: "We are witnessing China's rise and expansion, as they challenge free, democratic values and the global order through a combination of authoritarianism, nationalism, and economic might. As the strategic forefront of the Indo-Pacific region, Taiwan has become the first line of defense for democratic values." She went on to say: "China is encroaching on us through their sharp power, but as a crucial member of the region, we know that Taiwan must fulfill its responsibilities to the international community. We will not act provocatively or rashly; rather, we will work with like-minded countries to ensure that the peaceful and stable cross-strait status quo is not unilaterally altered." This clearly stated a cooperative orientation toward countries that share freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. (3)

As for the United States, the Department of Defense published its "Indo-Pacific Strategy Report" (4) on June 1, 2019, and the Department of State published "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (5) on November 4 of that year.

In the Department of Defense report, the United States is defined as a Pacific nation and the

Indo-Pacific is “the Department of Defense’s priority theater.” The report states that the United States “have an enduring commitment to uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific in which all nations, large and small, are secure in their sovereignty and able to pursue economic growth consistent with accepted international rules, norms, and principles of fair competition.”

This report conveys the following perception: After the Second World War, the United States formed an alliance with Japan to stimulate an economic boom in pursuit of partnership, not domination. In Taiwan, the United States aid helped create an open, democratic society. Elsewhere, the United States established formal diplomatic relations with China in 1979, which facilitated economic exchange and extended America’s consistent policy approach of a free, open market and equal trading opportunity. Their reason for doing so was the belief that economic liberalization would bring China into a greater partnership with the United States and the free world. However, while China aspires to free markets, justice, and the rule of law, the country undermines the international system from within by exploiting its benefits while simultaneously eroding the values and principles of the rules-based order. China additionally employs non-military tools coercively, including economic tools, during periods of political tensions with countries that China accuses of harming its national interests.

What this report is declaring is that “the United States has a vital interest in upholding the rules-based international order, which includes a strong, prosperous, and democratic Taiwan.” Consequently, the United States is “pursuing a strong partnership with Taiwan and will faithfully implement the Taiwan Relations Act, as part of a broader commitment to the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific.”

The report further names Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand, and Mongolia as democratic “countries” in the Indo-Pacific that the United States considers to be reliable partners. The United States values these four countries for their contribution to its missions around the world as well as for their active cooperation on efforts to uphold a free and open international order, and the United States seeks to strengthen its relationships with these countries.

By contrast, though China advocates for peaceful unification with Taiwan, China has never renounced the use of military force, and the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is preparing for “a contingency to unify Taiwan with the mainland by force, while simultaneously deterring, delaying, or denying any third-party intervention on Taiwan’s behalf.” The United States stance in response is to provide Taiwan with defense articles and services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.

These moves have been supported by overwhelming majorities in the United States Congress by both of the major parties, the Republican and Democratic parties, in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Taiwan Travel Act was passed unanimously on March 16, 2018, and the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act was passed on December 31, 2018. Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Acts of FY2018, 2019, and 2020, and likewise the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019 when President Trump signed it into law. (6)

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(1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs website:  
[https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/af/af2/page4\\_002268.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/af/af2/page4_002268.html)

(2) Ministry of Foreign Affairs website:  
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000430632.pdf>

- (3) Presidential Office Building website:  
<https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/5869>
- (4) Indo-Pacific Strategy Report  
<https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>
- (5) A FREE AND OPEN INDO-PACIFIC  
<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>
- (6) Taiwan Travel Act  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/535>,  
Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018,  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/2736/text>,  
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018,  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2810>,  
John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019,  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/5515/text>,  
National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020,  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1790>,  
Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019,  
<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1678/text>