

9ª EDIÇÃO | DEZEMBRO DE 2023

# STATE BUILDING & FRAGILITY MONITOR

*Indo-Pacífico*

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**INSTITUTO DO ORIENTE**

Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas



# STATE BUILDING & FRAGILITY MONITOR

## *Um Projeto do Instituto do Oriente*

9ª edição | 2023

O *State Building & State Fragility Monitor* apresenta-se como uma ferramenta útil para estudantes, académicos, *policy makers*, assim como todos os interessados em explorar as temáticas abordadas. Este projeto desenvolve uma vasta análise das dinâmicas internacionais e regionais, sobre o ponto de vista da construção ou fragilidade dos Estados, culminando na publicação deste monitor científico e académico.

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### Características Técnicas

Periodicidade Semestral | Publicação Gratuita

### Sede do Editor e da Redação

Instituto do Oriente / Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas

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9th edition | 2023

The *State Building & State Fragility Monitor* presents itself as a useful tool for students, academics, policy makers, as well as anyone interested in exploring the topics covered. This project develops a vast analysis of international and regional dynamics, from the point of view of the construction or fragility of States, culminating in the publication of this scientific and academic monitor.

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### Contributed to the 9th Edition of the *State Building & State Fragility Monitor*

Diogo Machado, Hugo Gonçalves, Inês Rito, Li Guofeng, Rita Durão, Salomé Rosa, Tiago Jorge.

### Technical Characteristics

Biannual journal | Free publication

### Editorial Office

Orient Institute / Institute of Social and Political Sciences of the University of Lisbon

Campus Universitário do Alto da Ajuda

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## EDITORIAL

NUNO CANAS MENDES

Presidente do Instituto do Oriente

A gravidade dos acontecimentos recentes, da pandemia à crise em Gaza, tem contribuído para que, desde 2020, a agenda mediática tenha entrado numa espiral de desinformação e contrainformação que vai dilacerando a confiança mínima que a humanidade deve depositar no valor da objetividade, do rigor e da verdade e de como a informação os deve refletir. Ninguém se surpreende com a intensidade do relativismo ou do viés; sempre existiram, mas convenhamos, talvez não com a intensidade e volatilidade a que temos assistido nestes últimos três anos.

Problemas antigos contrastados agora num momento de hiper-realismo poderá o leitor mais *blasé* ajuizar, mas mesmo assim com níveis de dramatismo e desnorte lamentáveis. Esta agenda tem contribuído também para uma erosão da atenção para temas de inegável importância e este número do *State-building & Fragility Monitor* trará-los para debate:

Reunindo os textos de um conjunto de jovens investigadores, de várias nacionalidades e instituições universitárias, saltam para cima da mesa a questão do Indo-Pacífico em dois artigos, um pela perspetiva da relação entre a Índia e o Japão e o outro sobre as implicações da Rota da Seda Digital; a sempiterna e revisitada política de Pequim de uma China única, também pela ótica económica; a relevância do desporto como fator de afirmação do poder no caso dos *Southeast Asian Games* do Cambodja; uma análise da trajetória da China no regime

internacional dos Direitos Humanos; o posicionamento da Coreia do Sul face à ameaça nuclear do seu vizinho do Norte. Quero agradecer os contributos dos autores - Salomé Rosa, Inês Rito, Li Guofeng, Hugo Coutinho Gonçalves, Diogo Machado, Rita Durão e Tiago Jorge – e exortar os leitores a que usufruam destas análises de jovens e promissores académicos.

A RELAÇÃO  
INDO-JAPONESA  
E O EQUILÍBRIO  
DE PODER  
REGIONAL: UMA  
TRÍADE DIRETIVA

SALOMÉ ROSA

Instituto Superior de Ciências  
Sociais e Políticas da  
Universidade de Lisboa

# A Relação Indo-Japonesa e o Equilíbrio de Poder Regional: Uma Tríade Diretiva

SALOMÉ ROSA

## Resumo

É de forma unânime que a comunidade científica interpreta o Indo-Pacífico enquanto tema unificador de uma grande estratégia que canaliza esforços em prol de uma visão normativa de liberdade e prosperidade coletiva. Neste sentido, ao considerar que a relação indo-japonesa assume uma importância cardinal na consolidação do efeito promovido pelo Indo-Pacífico, este artigo propõe a aplicação do modelo holístico elaborado por Frederick Kliem (2022) para demonstrar de que forma pode a respectiva contribuir para o equilíbrio de poder regional que a ascensão da China, por via da *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI), veio destabilizar. Para o efeito, sugere-se que o modelo seja levado a cabo por uma tríade diretiva que se manifesta no plano securitário, económico e político.

**Palavras-chave:** Indo-Pacífico, *Belt and Road Initiative*, Equilíbrio de Poder Regional, Relação Indo-Japonesa, Tríade Diretiva.

## 1. Introdução

Face ao colapso do comunismo soviético, ao fim da Guerra Fria e à entrada da China na economia internacional, a feição contemporânea das relações internacionais sofreu mudanças fundamentais que afetaram a natureza dos principais processos que dão corpo ao sistema. Num novo cenário de competição entre grandes potências – onde a rivalidade entre os Estados Unidos da América e a China adquire especial expressão – o exercício do poder político flui através de estruturas espaciais alternativas, numa ordem multipolar hierárquica que se faz dotar de um arranjo dinâmico de domínios geopolíticos onde o regionalismo substitui o globalismo (Cohen, 2015).

Neste quadro emergente de erosão hegemónica, novas equações de poder constroem atmosferas regionais alternativas de contestação. A região, que outrora se denominara Ásia-Pacífico, tem vindo a ser palco de uma competição binária entre duas grandes estratégias geopolíticas que enformam uma rede complexa de parcerias

estratégicas e alinhamentos multidimensionais onde os agentes procuram assegurar a estabilidade da agência. Tal se sucede porque, através da *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI), a República Popular da China (RPC) parece ambicionar alargar a sua esfera de influência de forma incompatível com o *statu quo*, desencadeando uma resposta por parte de Estados como o Japão e a Índia que, em virtude de um poder gravitacional, proclamam o Indo-Pacífico enquanto conceito versátil de uma nova realidade política, geografada após o discurso de Shinzo Abe no parlamento indiano sobre a confluência dos dois oceanos, em 2007. Porém, o Indo-Pacífico deixou de ser um mero neologismo utilizado para descrever um espaço geográfico e ganhou utilidade como tema unificador de uma grande estratégia que canaliza esforços em prol de uma visão normativa de liberdade e prosperidade coletiva, expressa sobretudo nas diversas ramificações da relação bilateral indo-japonesa (Horimoto, 2019).

Neste sentido, face ao impacto da disputa estratégica emergente na balança de poder da região, o presente artigo visa aplicar o modelo holístico de Frederick Kliem (2022) à relação indo-japonesa para, dado até o contexto de génese do conceito, demonstrar de que forma o papel da relação Indo-Japonesa na estratégia do Indo-Pacífico pode contribuir para o equilíbrio de poder regional. Para o efeito, o presente artigo explora a possibilidade de aplicar à respetiva dois projetos de construção de ordem paralelos e interdependentes – projeto de construção neorrealista e projeto de construção institucionalista – levados a cabo por uma tríade diretiva que a parceria estratégica da relação bilateral indo-japonesa materializa em três domínios diferentes – económico, securitário e institucional.

## **2. A Disputa Estratégica Emergente: Indo-Pacífico vs. BRI**

O mapa geopolítico vigente é o quociente dos padrões de reestruturação que tiveram lugar no passado, movidos pela relevância política e estratégica que ao longo dos séculos foi atribuída a determinadas localizações e configurações geográficas. Tal como Kliem denota, as regiões são “both a reflection of the current state of international affairs and, in logic consequence, subject to constant reevaluation and reconstruction” (Kliem, 2022, p.41). Nesta linha, enquanto o termo “Ásia-Pacífico” anexava uma noção predominantemente económica de interdependência, o termo “Indo-Pacífico” agrupa um conjunto de agendas estratégicas concorrentes à atividade da China, cada vez mais expressiva no panorama geopolítico (Jaiswal & Bhatt, 2021).

De certo modo, a literatura é apreendida pela preocupação quanto ao impacto da ascensão da RPC na distribuição de poder da região, interpretado como resultante de uma grande estratégia que, mediante uma postura revisionista, visa reconstituir a ordem regional com novas regras e normas de governação (Chan, 2020). Enquanto no século XX a sua orientação geopolítica dotava-se de uma natureza agudamente continental, exclusivamente orientada para a Eurásia, hoje a China encontra-se mais redirecionada para o exterior<sup>1</sup>, sobretudo porque as trocas marítimas figuram como base de sustento do seu desenvolvimento económico (Mitchell, 2020). Nesta perspetiva, é através da BRI, enquanto projeto de reordenamento regional e mecanismo de conectividade de força centrífuga que conecta o centro às periferias marginais, que a China prossegue com a sua visão geopolítica, alinhada ao conceito de *Heartland* Mackinderiano<sup>2</sup> no caso da *Silk Road Economic Belt* (SREB) e à teorização de Alfred T. Mahan, no caso da *Maritime Silk Road* (MSR) (Harper, 2017). Em concreto, de acordo com o *White Paper* publicado em março de 2015 pelo Governo da RPC, a BRI figura como projeto cuja finalidade é...

[...] promote the connectivity of [the] Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, set up all-dimensional, multi-tiered and composite connectivity networks, and realize diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these countries. (RPC, 2015).

Deste modo, através da BRI, no que à via terrestre concerne, a China tem-se conseguido posicionar no epicentro da geopolítica regional, sendo-lhe adicionalmente possibilitado um envolvimento intercontinental multifacetado com a África<sup>3</sup> e o Médio

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<sup>1</sup> A promoção de um carácter anfíbio manifesta-se na produção de *Sharp Power*, concretizada através do aproveitamento das assimetrias do sistema internacional, da modernização naval chinesa e de uma maior assertividade marítima em zonas estrategicamente relevantes, como é o caso do Estreito de Malaca, do sul do Mar da China Meridional e dos canais do Suez e do Panamá (Ahmed & Lambert, 2021)

<sup>2</sup> O *Heartland* Sino-Cêntrico atualmente em construção simboliza uma restauração da norma histórica, no âmbito da qual a China consegue conectar as zonas periféricas e expandir a sua esfera de influência até ao centro do globo. Este elevado grau de sinocentrismo figura visivelmente nos principais conceitos ideológicos de Xi Jinping e na visão que o respetivo apresenta para o desenvolvimento do país, sobretudo com a apresentação do *Chinese Dream* (Habova, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Dada a importância estratégica do continente africano, o país empregou um conjunto de bilateralismos *ad hoc* com os Estados Africanos que culminaram na Política Africana da China em 2007. Neste contexto, iniciativas de diálogo como o Fórum de Cooperação China-África (FOCAC) revelaram-se fundamentais à institucionalização de relações sino-africanas mais amplas e ao envolvimento do continente de forma multilateral através da BRI (Jaiswal & Bhatt, 2021).



Oriente. Por outro lado, no que compete à via marítima, a RPC reforçou as capacidades militares nacionais e posicionou-se estrategicamente em *choque points* no Oceano Índico e Pacífico, edificando uma constelação emergente de portos e instalações que se estende de Djibouti a Gwadar, Hambantota e ao vital estreito de Malaca – configuração que, informalmente, se denomina “Cordão de Pérolas” (Lahkar, 2020). Em paralelo, desde 2009 que a China tem vindo a intensificar as suas reivindicações no mar do Sul da China e a adotar uma postura assertiva que não se cinge à regulação invocada pela norma liberal, sobretudo evidente com a insistência da sua *Nine Dash Line* e consecutiva discordância legal com várias nações do Sudoeste Asiático (Reichler, 2019).

Desta forma, a ascensão da China no teatro regional e subsequente postura assertiva fez com que o termo Indo-Pacífico fosse popularizado em 2007, no âmbito da relação indo-japonesa. Shinzo Abe, na altura primeiro-ministro do Japão, reconheceu a importância geoestratégica da Índia face à assertividade da RPC, razão pela qual o Japão começou a operacionalizar o conceito através dos diversos mecanismos bilaterais, trilaterais e multilaterais que partilha com a Índia no plano económico, político e securitário. Inicialmente, o termo foi aplicado no contexto da cooperação económica, por se reconhecer que a união forçada dos dois Oceanos albergaria a maioria do comércio mundial de bens e recursos, assim como as principais interações entre as grandes potências da região (Manhas, 2022). Nesta linha, o Indo-Pacífico entrou no discurso diplomático enquanto estratégia emergente na década de 2010, emitido pela Austrália, Índia, Japão e Estados Unidos da América (EUA) no âmbito do Diálogo de Segurança Quadrilateral (Quad). Por sua vez, em 2022, o conceito adquire uma natureza geoestratégica com a publicação da *Indo-Pacific Strategy* por parte dos EUA, conferindo substância à sua inserção antecedente no discurso político proferido ao longo da administração Obama em matéria de política externa tangente ao continente asiático. Deste modo, a sua conotação abandona a esfera exclusivamente económica que o Japão inicialmente lhe aplicara, para ganhar uma subordinação securitária, assumindo um certo grau de transversalidade que lhe concedeu o estatuto de contrarreação estratégica de balanço.

### 3. A Parceria Estratégica Indo-Japonesa e o Indo-Pacífico

Enquanto a BRI figura como grande estratégia geopolítica exclusivamente nacional, o Indo-Pacífico nasce no âmbito do eixo económico da parceria estratégica que o Japão e a Índia estabelecem em 2006, com a “Declaração Conjunta para a Parceria Estratégica e Global Índia-Japão”. Neste sentido, à semelhança da norma, tal como as parcerias estratégicas nascem de colaborações estruturadas “between states (or other actors) to take advantage of economic opportunities or to respond to security challenges more effectively than could be achieved in isolation” (Wilkins, 2011, p.67), também a parceria estratégica estabelecida entre o Japão e a Índia tem sido instituída em âmbitos diversos de forma a moldar a sua cooperação às oportunidades e desafios impostos pela conjuntura.

De uma forma inicial, por considerar a Índia como parceiro fundamental para a concretização do Indo-Pacífico enquanto visão estratégica geoeconómica, Shinzo Abe apresentou no Parlamento Indiano, em 2007, a “Confluence of two seas”, afirmando que...

The Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity. A “broader Asia” that broke away geographical boundaries is now beginning to take on a distinct form. Our two countries have the ability – and the responsibility – to ensure that it broadens yet further and to nurture and enrich these seas to become seas of clearest transparency. (Abe, 2007)

Como tal, o primeiro entre ambos a introduzir o termo como visão de política externa foi o Japão, em 2016. No âmbito da sexta Conferência Internacional de Tóquio sobre o Desenvolvimento Africano (TICAD), no Quénia, o ex-primeiro ministro japonês Shinzo Abe apresentou a *Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy* (FOIPS), dando ênfase à importância da conectividade económica e securitária entre, simultaneamente, o Oceano Índico e Pacífico, e os continentes africano e asiático. Neste sentido, por considerar África como uma região dotada de potencial económico, Abe afirmou que a sua otimização só poderia ser levada a cabo com a preservação das linhas marítimas de comunicação (SLOCs), o que exigiria garantir um contexto regional assente na liberdade, no Estado de Direito, na prosperidade e na manutenção de uma economia de mercado, ambiente para o qual não seria propício o uso da força ou da coerção (Borah, 2021). Desta forma, de um ponto de vista estratégico, o Japão identificou os diversos canais de comunicação institucionalizados, a cimeira bilateral anual e os diálogos estratégicos de Ministros dos Negócios Estrangeiros que estabelece com a Índia como sendo ferramentas fundamentais

através do qual o país consegue conjugar capacidades para advogar pela manutenção da conjuntura vigente, fazendo ainda um reforço normativo ao redirecionar a sua política externa para a preservação de uma ordem regional consonante com a ordem internacional regulada pelas regras e princípios da égide liberal (Faisal, 2020).

Porém, apesar da visão em comum, ambos os parceiros divergem em objetivos estratégicos. Enquanto, por um lado, o Japão atua como potência *statu quo*, a Índia procura adquirir um estatuto emergente, o que implica gerir determinados pontos de contacto com a China, dada a extensão da esfera de influência que a RPC apresenta na região. Por um lado, ambos os países partilham interesses enquanto membros dos BRICS, da Organização para a Cooperação de Xangai (SCO), e do Banco Asiático de Investimento em Infraestruturas (AIIB), mecanismos através dos quais competem pela liderança regional e interagem face à discórdia sobre a delimitação de fronteiras e a soberania nacional (Chan, 2020).

Por outro lado, dado o legado colonial que figura no registo histórico, a Índia atribui um valor significativo à sua autonomia estratégica e assume um certo grau de resistência em aderir a quadros organizacionais altamente vinculativos. Apesar de ter obtido notoriedade e *status* a partir das vantagens inerentes às parcerias que estabeleceu ao longo dos anos – bilaterais, trilaterais e multilaterais – a sua adesão a iniciativas internacionais de partilha valorativa soberana permanece, não no vácuo, mas estritamente condicionada pelo exercício de poder da China (Cannon & Hakata, 2021). Sobretudo por essa razão, a adoção do Indo-Pacífico enquanto visão de política externa revelou-se moderada, tendo esta sido efetivada somente após a chegada de Narendra Modi ao poder em 2014.

Sobre o governo de Modi, a Índia tem vindo a mudar a sua posição enquanto ator internacional ativo, iniciada com a transição da política externa do “Look East” para a “Act East Policy” (AEP). Nesta linha, o país tem vindo a assumir um papel mais ativo na promoção das relações económicas, culturais e estratégicas com os Estados do Pacífico por meio de uma integração contínua a nível regional (bilateral e multilateral) fomentando simultaneamente as relações com as nações do Sudeste Asiático através de uma maior proximidade com a ASEAN (Paul, 2021). Por outro lado, perante a necessidade de diversificar a postura externa para solucionar o seu carácter insular face à crescente expressividade marítima dos seus interesses comerciais, a política externa da Índia passou

a considerar como estrategicamente relevante a manutenção da segurança das rotas marítimas, para a qual é estrategicamente pertinente a visão convergente do FOIP do Japão (Khurana, 2007). Nesta linha, de forma complementar, a Índia reconhece as vantagens significativas de interesse nacional que podem ser monopolizadas através da parceria bilateral matura que estabelece com o aliado japonês, assente na complementaridade e reforçada pelo Indo-Pacífico enquanto conceito normativo<sup>4</sup> (Basrur & Kutty, 2022).

As relações entre o Japão e a Índia remontam ao período da Guerra Fria e têm vindo a progredir significativamente desde da década de 2000. Com um forte grau de proximidade, a sua cooperação tem resultado no desenvolvimento de uma política externa estreita de base valorativa, fruto da mesma visão, objetivos e interesses para a região. Assim, enquanto parceiros de conveniência, tanto em termos económicos como políticos, a sua associação pode ser interpretada à luz da mútua indispensabilidade (Horimoto, 2019). Numa primeira instância, o relacionamento foi impulsionado pela ânsia coletiva de se ajustarem às mudanças no equilíbrio da balança de poder global, com a Índia a adquirir um *status* notório e, subjacentemente, a construir organicamente uma rede de acordos comerciais que lhe permitissem gerir a influência que a China tem vindo a exercer na sub-região do sudeste asiático e no Oceano Índico (Sana & Akhtar, 2020).

Na prática, a Índia tem reagido à crescente assertividade da China no palco regional através do reforço da presença em diversos fóruns multilaterais patentes à arquitetura do Indo-Pacífico, participação sobre a qual a relação bilateral indo-japonesa exerceu um papel fundamental, sobretudo enquanto corolário e no contexto do Quad. Porém, numa esfera de influência considerada por alguns académicos como diametralmente oposta, a Índia tem procurado interagir com a China via reuniões bilaterais, fóruns multilaterais, como os BRICS (Brasil, Rússia, Índia, China, África do Sul), e diálogos trilaterais, como o RIC (Rússia, Índia, China), meio através do qual o país visa cooperar com o rival regional, e evitar uma escalada militar crítica (Panda & Basu, 2018).

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<sup>4</sup> As áreas de interesse económico de ambos os países são complementares. Enquanto o Japão, como economia desenvolvida, é um país rico em capital e grande parte do respetivo se encontra acumulado, a Índia é um Estado ainda em desenvolvimento económico e com grande necessidade de capital para expandir o seu tecido infraestrutural, bem como para satisfazer as suas necessidades de energia, urbanização, educação e saúde, entre outras (Jain, 2010).

#### 4. Tríade Diretiva: Rumo ao Equilíbrio de Poder Regional

Seja estado ou circunstância, entende-se por equilíbrio de poder uma distribuição de poder igualitária numa determinada área geográfica que se estabelece entre dois ou mais atores envolvidos (Jaiswal & Bhatt, 2021). Ao respetivo, acresce que, como condição necessária, este exige que a interação entre as partes seja regida por regras, sustentadas por um consenso intersubjetivo sobre os principais objetivos do *statu quo*. Por outras palavras, um estado de equilíbrio de poder só emerge dentro de uma ordem estável, entendida como “a structured pattern of relationships among states that involves some combination of parts, including emergent norms, rulemaking institutions, and international political organizations or regimes, among others (Mazarr *et all.*, 2016, p.7)

O contexto institucionalizado pós-guerra fria a partir do qual os Estados se relacionavam entre si tendo por base as normas e princípios da ordem liberal internacional foi alterado. Ao ganhar um estatuto hegemónico, a China entrou em desacordo com a ordem liberal vigente que a *Pax Americana* outrora edificara, provocando implicações concretas sobre a balança de poder regional que se manifestam de forma expressiva na disputa emergente entre o Indo-Pacífico e a BRI enquanto estratégias expansivas de esferas de influência. Neste quadro teórico de reconstrução da ordem regional, tanto a contestação como a legitimação desempenham papéis fundamentais. Neste sentido, instaurar o equilíbrio regional só parece possível se for a partir de um modelo construtivo capaz de garantir que as interações entre os Estados são reguladas por um conjunto de normas e processos que sinergicamente conjugam os diversos interesses nacionais numa atmosfera de coexistência pacífica onde o conflito não é gerido por meio do uso da força (Capie & Evans, 2002; Chan, 2020; Kliem, 2022).

Para o efeito, é aqui proposta a aplicação do modelo teórico de Kliem à parceria estratégica indo-japonesa. Adotando uma abordagem eclética, este modelo de equilíbrio procura compreender o sistema complexo da região através de um enfoque holístico, na medida em que faz uso da “traditional dialectic between neorealism and liberal institutionalism in international relations theory” para propor uma solução alternativa à estabilidade da balança de poder mundial (Kliem, 2022, p.22). Nesta linha, no que ao palco regional diz respeito, propõe-se aqui a aplicação do respetivo modelo na medida em que será possível partir da relação bilateral indo-japonesa para efetivar o Indo-Pacífico enquanto geoestratégia de equilíbrio de poder regional. Para o efeito, o modelo deverá ser

concretizado através de dois projetos de construção paralelos levados a cabo por uma tríade diretiva (ver Anexo 1) com três eixos de atuação: (i) Securitário, através do Diálogo de Segurança Quadrilateral (Quad); (ii) Político, através da cooperação estreita com a Associação de Nações do Sudeste Asiático (ASEAN); e (iii) Económico, com o estreitar da relação económica bilateral complementar de cooperação no âmbito do Corredor Económico para o Crescimento da Ásia e da África (AAGC).

Neste sentido, e tal como será demonstrado, ambos os projetos poderão permitir alcançar o equilíbrio regional ao instaurar uma ordem liberal política e económica<sup>5</sup>, ordem esta que não implica, necessariamente, difundir a democracia liberal enquanto regime estatal, mas antes instalar na região o compromisso explícito de respeito pelos princípios liberais da governação política. Já no âmbito do liberalismo económico, trata-se de assegurar uma economia regional baseada nos princípios do mercado livre, institucionalizada pelos mecanismos da economia liberal internacional (Ikenberry & Lim, 2017; Kliem, 2022).

#### **4.1. Projeto de construção neorrealista**

No âmbito do projeto de construção neorrealista, a estabilidade da ordem regional é perspectivada por paridade ou superioridade de competências militares e *hard power*, na medida em que se perspetiva que no plano securitário a assertividade da China poderá ser contida caso surja um ator ou uma aliança alternativa na região capaz de a deter.

Desta forma, o Quad simboliza uma pedra angular na manutenção do plano securitário do Indo-Pacífico. Enquanto diálogo estratégico em áreas de cooperação mútua estabelecido em 2006, na sequência do Grupo Central do Tsunami de 2005, entre o Japão, a Índia, a Austrália e os EUA, o Quad visa dar resposta ao desafio securitário imposto pela assertividade marítima da China (Panda & Gunasekara-Rockwell, 2022). Apesar de extinto em 2008 após a saída da Austrália do mecanismo securitário, em 2017 foi restituído e em 2021 elevado ao estatuto de cimeira, registando uma expansão informal que culminou com

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<sup>5</sup> Apesar da falta de consenso na academia quanto à posição da China na ordem liberal internacional, é de realçar que aqui se argumenta que a China não é contra a ordem liberal, mas contra o Sistema liberal internacional edificado pela Pax Americana, tratando-se este de um tipo de ordem liberal (Ikenberry & Lim, 2017). A China atua a favor dos mecanismos que sustentam o carácter liberal da ordem assistindo-se, simbioticamente, dos respetivos para sustentar a sua ascensão no sistema internacional.

a criação do Quad Plus após o convite de diálogo dirigido pelo grupo à Coreia do Sul, ao Vietname e à Nova Zelândia (EFSAS, 2022).

Neste sentido, ao possuir uma configuração geopolítica relevante e conjugar as capacidades militares do agrupamento, o Quad pode reforçar a supremacia marítima coletiva e assegurar a liberdade de navegação, fortalecendo o Estado de Direito e assegurando que o *statu quo* é mantido de acordo com as normas internacionais da ordem liberal. Por outro lado, o Quad pode ainda apoiar a soberania e prosperidade de Estados da orla costeira, sobretudo os que se situam no Sudeste Asiático, como é o caso da Indonésia, a fim de se posicionar como meio de contenção à crescente assertividade naval que a China exhibe por meio da MSR (Batongbacal et al., 2018).

#### **4.2. Projeto de construção institucionalista**

Por sua vez, no que concerne ao projeto de construção institucionalista, visa-se, essencialmente, a atuação sincrónica de um conjunto de mecanismos multilaterais institucionalizados que possibilitem evitar a polarização da região com a criação de espaços de diálogo e cooperação. Deste modo, a partir de duas linhas de atuação – uma económica e outra política – o projeto procura instalar uma dinâmica de poder que permita mediar as relações interestatais na região a nível processual e com base no regime internacional edificado pelo compromisso explícito dos governos com os princípios liberais de governação política (Kliem, 2022).

Nesta linha, a relação entre a Índia, o Japão e a ASEAN figura como alicerce basilar. A ASEAN é constituída por Estados de pequena e média dimensão na região do Sudeste Asiático, e firma uma instituição multilateral regida por regras e normas, conferindo base a um sistema complementar de ordem local através do qual se podem instalar princípios da ordem internacional liberal que, nesse sentido, ganham legitimidade sub-regional (Panda, 2023). Paralelamente, a associação possibilita o diálogo consultivo e permite soluções multilaterais sobre problemas que sejam transversais aos Estados integrantes da região, circunstância fundamental face à assertividade da China no Mar Meridional e às disputas que a respetiva trava com diversos Estados-membros da associação, razão pela qual, a junho de 2019, a Associação publicou o “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific”, documento onde é dado ênfase à segurança e prosperidade coletiva do Indo-Pacífico.

Por outro lado, no âmbito do projeto de construção institucionalista com atuação no plano económico, é de realçar a iniciativa indo-japonesa do Corredor de Crescimento Ásia-África (AAGC), criada em 2017 na cimeira anual entre o primeiro-ministro indiano Narendra Modi e o primeiro-ministro japonês Shinzo Abe. Enquanto alternativa de cooperação para o desenvolvimento económico à BRI no continente africano, o AAGC apresenta-se como um mecanismo de desenvolvimento holístico congruente com a maturidade do ecossistema infraestrutural dos países africanos parceiros, sendo constituído por um conjunto de corredores marítimos que conectam os portos da Índia aos de Estados litorais na costa africana do Oceano Índico - Etiópia, Quênia, Tanzânia, Somália, Moçambique, Gana, Gâmbia e Costa do Marfim (Ghasiya, 2017).

Desta forma, a fim de igualar a presença diplomática da China no continente africano, o AAGC procura integrar a África, a Ásia Oriental, o Sudoeste Asiático e a Oceânia por meio de um mecanismo de conectividade regional assente nos princípios liberais da visão FOIP, alicerçado em quatro pilares fundamentais – (i) reforço das capacidades e competências; (ii) infraestruturas de qualidade e conectividade institucional; (iii) projetos de desenvolvimento e cooperação; e (iv) Parcerias interpessoais (Asher, 2017).

Desta forma, através do projeto de construção institucionalista, a ASEAN permite a criação de um espaço de diálogo dissuasor através do qual as normas e princípios liberais adquirem legitimação, enquanto o AAGC se perspetiva como mecanismo de desenvolvimento económico concorrente capaz de incitar vontade de cooperação multilateral no continente africano com a RPC, dado serem as trocas comerciais, enquanto ferramenta geoeconómica, o principal meio utilizado pela China para atingir os seus objetivos geopolíticos.

## 5. Conclusão

A partir de uma perspetiva macro, o presente artigo visou discorrer sobre o papel da relação indo-japonesa nas dinâmicas de poder que marcam o espaço geográfico recentemente delimitado pelo conceito Indo-Pacífico. De facto, no que a esta região se subentende, assiste-se, enquanto palco principal, à disputa entre as duas principais dinâmicas geopolíticas concorrentes que atualmente definem a competição hegemónica da ordem internacional e destabilizam a balança de poder regional – o Indo-Pacífico e a *BRI*. Por um lado, no que ao primeiro diz respeito, atores regionais efetivam agendas



estratégicas que têm como objetivo gerir o impacto colateral da ascensão da China na manutenção do *statu quo* liberal, enquanto por outro, no que ao segundo concerne, assiste-se à extração da vantagem competitiva numa arena onde a norma liberal está a perder o seu efeito, desvirtuada pela postura revisionista da RPC.

Dado tratar-se de uma região demarcada pela diversidade política, económica e cultural, o Indo-Pacífico figura como conjuntura pouco fértil à expansão de multilateralismos e bilateralismos coesos. Porém, neste contexto, a relação Indo-Japonesa destaca-se como uma irregularidade pela sua base *sui generis* de natureza complementar. Enquanto aliados próximos de cooperação em diversas matérias, a Índia e o Japão são dos principais atores a sustentar o Indo-Pacífico como geoestratégia de contenção, para o qual tem vindo a ser fundamental a parceria estratégica que a relação bilateral indo-japonesa materializa em três domínios diferentes – económico, securitário e político.

Desta forma o presente artigo visou demonstrar que o equilíbrio de poder regional destabilizado principalmente pela BRI, enquanto projeto de desconstrução da ordem regional, poderia ser alcançado pela relação indo-japonesa enquanto veículo do Indo-Pacífico caso esta se consolidasse por meio de uma tríade diretiva com três eixos principais de atuação. No primeiro, tal se sucederia caso a reconstrução da ordem se fizesse por meio de um projeto neorrealista com expressão no Quad, por meio do qual a segurança regional seria assegurada em conformidade com a ética liberal. No que aos dois últimos eixos concerne, um político e outro económico, é dada ênfase à centralidade da ASEAN como fórum de diálogo capaz de legitimar um quadro normativo de respeito pelo *statu quo* compatível com os princípios do Quad, efetivamente complementado pelo AAGC enquanto projeto alternativo de cooperação que conecta o continente asiático ao continente africano.

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## Anexos

### Anexo 1: Tríade Diretiva da Relação Indo-Japonesa



Fonte: elaboração do autor.

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AS IMPLICAÇÕES  
DA *DIGITAL SILK*  
*ROAD* PARA O  
INDO-PACÍFICO

INÊS RITO

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# As implicações da *Digital Silk Road* para o Indo-Pacífico

INÊS RITO

## Resumo:

O presente artigo explora a crescente influência da China na região do Indo-Pacífico e como o desenvolvimento das suas iniciativas contribuiu para a formação da concepção de Indo-Pacífico, fruto de uma coligação estratégica destinada a contrariar o poder e a influência da China, introduzindo simultaneamente uma dimensão marítima à geopolítica regional. É dado um foco especial à *Digital Silk Road* (DSR), uma componente integral da *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI), e às suas implicações para a cibersegurança e a governação. Ao longo do artigo, o contexto da DSR é utilizado como fator exemplificativo da crescente vantagem competitiva da China, uma vez que razões como a vigilância, a censura, a dependência tecnológica e o modelo de governação autoritário impedem que outras grandes potências, incluindo o Japão, a Índia e os Estados Unidos, que enfatizam a visão de um Indo-Pacífico “aberto e livre”, alcancem os seus interesses na região.

**Palavras-chave:** *Digital Silk Road*; *Belt and Road Initiative*; China; Indo-Pacífico

## 1. Introdução

A *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) possibilitou o aumento da influência chinesa em diversos domínios, incluindo no digital. Em 2015, na sequência do plano de ação da BRI, é divulgada a *Information Silk Road*, a qual se focava inicialmente em infraestruturas físicas de tecnologias da informação e comunicação (TIC) e sistemas de partilha de informação (Chow-Bing, 2021). Em 2017, no *Belt and Road Forum* (BRF), Xi Jinping promove a *Digital Silk Road* (DSR), desta vez virada para as tecnologias emergentes, incluindo a economia digital, a Inteligência Artificial (IA), a nanotecnologia e a *big data*. Mais tarde, na *China-ASEAN Business Summit* de 2020, o discurso passou a incluir elementos como tecnologia 5G, comércio eletrónico, *blockchain* e telemedicina (Meia, 2022). A DSR foi posteriormente ganhando cada vez mais relevância pela sua ligação à *Health Silk Road* (HSR), outra componente integral da BRI, através da cooperação em matéria de saúde pública e partilha de informação para assistência médica (Liow, 2021). O âmbito e objetivos da DSR são

pouco claros e não é atribuída a projetos específicos, sendo adotada como um conceito que abrange todos os projetos relacionados com tecnologias implementados pelos ministérios chineses ou um conceito que se refere a operações relacionadas com o setor da economia digital (Triolo, Allison, Brown, & Broderick, 2020).

A região da Ásia-Pacífico ocupa um lugar central na estratégia da BRI, onde a China tem concentrado esforços significativos para ampliar a sua presença e influência em diversos setores. A conceção de “Indo-Pacífico”, utilizada em substituição do termo Ásia-Pacífico, não é consensual e permanece altamente debatida nas Relações Internacionais. É geralmente aceite que geograficamente se refere à área que liga o Oceano Índico ao Oceano Pacífico (Singh, 2023). A designação é patrocinada pelos membros do *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue* (Quad), que inclui os EUA, a Austrália, a Índia e o Japão, com a pretensão de promover um *Free and Open Indo-Pacific* (FOIP). No centro da estratégia estão os países do Sudeste Asiático que constituem a Associação de Nações do Sudeste Asiático (ASEAN) (Choong, 2019).

Como revela Wang Yi, o atual Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros, o governo chinês considera o “Indo-Pacífico” uma estratégia para manter um sistema internacional liderado pelos EUA, sendo que se referiu à mesma como “nova NATO”, reiterando que é um fator que contamina a cooperação entre a China e a ASEAN e dificulta a paz e o desenvolvimento do Extremo Oriente (MFA, 2022). Com efeito, poderá ser argumentado que a conceção de Indo-Pacífico está interligada com as alterações no panorama geopolítico provocadas pelos impactos da China na reestruturação da ordem mundial, fomentada, por exemplo, pela sua modernização militar e por planos de investimento como a BRI (Tomé, 2019).

Ao longo deste artigo, serão discutidos os desafios de governação e segurança invocados pela DSR, bem como as implicações geopolíticas subjacentes. Será enfatizada a inquietação de outras grandes potências, provocada pela crescente influência chinesa como um dos fatores que levou à ascensão da conceção de Indo-Pacífico.

## **2. Desafios de governação e segurança**

A DSR constitui uma das estratégias para promover a perspetiva chinesa de governação cibernética. A aceitação de normas por outros governos, principalmente de países emergentes, centra-se na ambição de redução da influência norte-americana e na adoção



da soberania digital como meio para combater estratégias centradas em perspectivas ocidentais, as quais tendem a rejeitar outras visões de governação (Hussain, Hussain, Khan, & Imran, 2023). Em 2017, a China divulgou a *Belt and Road Digital Economy International Cooperation Initiative*, com o apoio do Egito, Laos, Arábia Saudita, Sérvia, Tailândia, Turquia e Emirados Árabes Unidos (EAU) (Belt and Road Portal, 2019). No acordo, estão explícitos 15 princípios gerais, tanto para infraestrutura digital como infraestrutura física, sendo de destacar o princípio 14, que salienta o respeito pela soberania digital (Erie & Streinz, 2021), essencial para a política chinesa de governação do ciberespaço que enfatiza o controlo e monitorização governamental da internet (Budnitsky & Ji, 2018).

Os desafios de governação estão interligados com as preocupações de segurança e partilha de dados provenientes da integração tecnológica chinesa na infraestrutura digital das diversas regiões. Nesta área destacam-se as questões de soberania digital, privacidade e ameaças cibernéticas. No que respeita à privacidade: “China’s approach to data governance targets unlawful use of personal information by non-state actors but lacks adequate barriers to governmental intrusion of privacy.” (Erie & Streinz, 2021, p. 19). Como exemplo, destaca-se a implementação de tecnologia chinesa nos projetos de *smart cities*, que têm como consequência o aumento da vigilância e controlo de cidadãos (Meia, 2022).

Quanto às questões regulatórias, a infraestrutura da DSR não opera segundo padrões de acordos comerciais para governação de dados da UE ou dos EUA. Ainda assim, conta com: “non-binding bilateral and multilateral instruments for international coordination between itself and DSR host states” (Erie & Streinz, 2021, p. 41). As suas normas atuam de acordo com a assinatura de memorandos de entendimento (MoU’s), os quais não são juridicamente vinculativos (Chan, 2022).

Através da DSR, pode ser possível melhorar exponencialmente a conectividade digital com o apoio das empresas chinesas, no entanto existe o risco de que o governo chinês exerça cada vez mais influência sobre os aspetos jurídicos e de governação de dados dos países pertencentes à BRI:

While ostensibly providing transnational connectivity through Chinese SOEs and private companies, the DSR might lead to domestic data enclosures, if host states decide to mimic China’s domestic data governance regime and create data control infrastructures comparable to China’s. In this way, the Chinese party-state may influence both legal and infrastructural data governance in BRI states. (Erie & Streinz, 2021, p. 43)

Por último, todas as preocupações apresentadas interligam-se com a questão da dependência tecnológica e com as vulnerabilidades em relação à infraestrutura crítica, fruto dos interesses da China no que respeita à implementação dos seus *standards* tecnológicos (Mochinaga, 2021). Através da transferência de infraestrutura digital, a China coloca-se numa posição de vantagem relativamente ao seu papel de influência no controlo de dados transnacionais e sistema de governação digital (Erie & Streinz, 2021).

### 3. Implicações geopolíticas

O mercado asiático detém um contexto favorável para a propagação da influência regional e para o fortalecimento do poder digital da China, o que se deve a diversos fatores, como a presença de várias economias emergentes na região, a proximidade geográfica e a relação cultural mais próxima entre os países asiáticos (Chen, 2023). Por exemplo, no caso de países do Sudeste Asiático, ao promover laços económicos e digitais mais estreitos, a China projeta o seu *sharp power* e molda as dinâmicas regionais a seu favor (Cheney, 2019).

A presença chinesa no Sudeste Asiático é frequentemente caracterizada pela literatura como revisionista. Dada a sua participação em fóruns multilaterais da ASEAN, acordos comerciais, investimentos e aumento de influência política, parece atuar no sentido da alteração da ordem regional (Gong, 2019). A estratégia parece ir de encontro à preservação da abertura económica, beneficiando da ordem liberal, e, simultaneamente, promovendo a disseminação do autoritarismo digital:

China wants to change the global order to boost geoeconomic competition and extend political illiberalism. In the newly created global order that China attempts to establish, technological superiority and economic advantage through investments in digital infrastructure, particularly in developing nations, will play a crucial role. (Koshy, 2022, p. 334)

A implementação da BRI suscita preocupações entre os atores regionais relativamente às intenções da China e ao seu potencial de influência e dependência das suas infraestruturas, nomeadamente os países que se encontram em disputas territoriais pelo Mar do Sul da China (Gong, 2019). Atualmente, várias ilhas e espaço marítimo da região são disputados pela China, Taiwan, Tailândia, Vietname, Brunei, Indonésia, Malásia e Filipinas (Center for Preventive Action, 2022). A militarização do porto de Djibuti, a base naval do porto de Gwadar e a construção de um observatório marítimo para apoiar

submarinos nucleares de ataque e submarinos nucleares de mísseis balísticos no Oceano Índico confirmam a crescente modernização militar (Chellaney, 2018).

Como retrata Hemmings (2020), o nível regional é essencial para a estratégia chinesa a longo prazo e tem como objetivo a alteração da atual ordem global. O mesmo autor considera que a DSR terá consequências geopolíticas no que respeita ao acesso e controlo de dados transnacionais e na afirmação do modelo de governação chinês, dos seus sistemas de vigilância e das suas instituições financeiras. Por outro lado, dada a sua ambiguidade, autores como Cheng e Zeng (2023) não consideram a DSR parte de um plano geopolítico consolidado e coordenado, mas sim de um conglomerado de interesses de agências estatais e empresas chinesas que despoletou uma narrativa de securitização exagerada por parte dos Estados Unidos.

À medida que a China expande a sua influência, depara-se frequentemente com a concorrência de outras grandes potências, nomeadamente os Estados Unidos e o Japão, os quais também procuram reforçar a sua presença e preponderância. A iniciativa pode potencialmente amplificar estas rivalidades e alimentar a competição por influência, recursos e vantagens estratégicas (Hemmings, 2020). Atualmente, tanto os Estados Unidos, como o Japão e a Índia, oferecem iniciativas alternativas que podem ter consequências para o domínio da BRI (Gong, 2019).

A DSR, inserida na BRI, é apenas um dos fatores catalisadores da inquietação de outras grandes potências. Um dos frutos dessa inquietação surge na forma de alianças políticas, como será o caso da Quad que, apesar de se diversificar nas razões e interesses possui o objetivo comum de contrabalançar a influência chinesa (Tomé, 2019).

#### **4. Conclusão**

A ascensão da conceção de Indo-Pacífico relaciona-se com os impactos da China na região, nomeadamente a sua postura agressiva quanto ao Mar do Sul da China, a construção de portos no Oceano Índico e a propagação da BRI, refletindo uma união estratégica criada para contrabalançar o poder e influência chinesa e oferecendo uma dimensão marítima às tensões geopolíticas.

Integrada na BRI, a DSR constitui uma iniciativa que deu asas às preocupações de segurança e governação no ciberespaço. O controlo e monitorização digitais proporcionam inúmeras vantagens estratégicas, como vigilância, acesso a dados e

benefícios noutras áreas do domínio digital, essenciais para a competição nos setores da tecnologia e da segurança cibernética. No campo da governação, a China fortalece a sua influência estabelecendo mecanismos de cooperação e governação digital, o que inclui a promoção de regulamentações e normas que favoreçam os seus interesses e reforcem a sua posição como líder no panorama digital regional. Como exemplos concretos, destacam-se a promoção dos *standards* chineses e a digitalização do RMB.

O contexto da DSR permite à China um ponto de vantagem e aumenta o seu poder de influência, sendo que fatores como elevados níveis de vigilância, exemplificada na implementação de *smart cities*; a censura e manipulação de informação; o estabelecimento de vantagem económica, naturalmente alcançada através da criação de dependência tecnológica, bem como a propagação de modelos de governação autoritários, dificultam que outras grandes potências cumpram os seus próprios interesses na região.

Segundo a narrativa de atores como o Japão, a Índia e os Estados Unidos, com as suas próprias alternativas de investimento, a crescente influência digital da China no Indo-Pacífico suscita preocupações quanto à sua capacidade de moldar as narrativas regionais, estabelecer dependências económicas e, potencialmente, obter a vantagem estratégica no meio digital. Enquanto os membros da Quad enfatizam que o objetivo da cooperação para o Indo-Pacífico será a de criar uma região mais “aberta e livre”, não podem ser descartados os seus próprios interesses na região, os quais podem ser avançados com o combate à influência chinesa em blocos estratégicos como o do Sudeste Asiático.

O domínio digital é cada vez mais relevante e evoluiu para se tornar numa nova arena de conflitos internacionais. A ascensão meteórica da China como potência digital despoletou uma série de apreensões que se tornam em complexos casos de estudo. A competição entre grandes potências no ciberespaço é evidente, com disputas que vão desde a segurança cibernética até a corrida pelo desenvolvimento das TIC. Com efeito, levantam-se questões cruciais sobre privacidade, liberdade e soberania digital. No futuro, será fundamental encontrar um equilíbrio entre o aproveitamento das oportunidades e a gestão dos riscos associados à era digital.

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CONSTRUCTING  
THE ONE-CHINA:  
BEIJING'S POLICY  
TOWARDS  
TAIWAN

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# Constructing the One-China: Beijing's Policy towards Taiwan

LI GUOFENG

## Abstract

The Taiwan Question always generates international concern. With the war in Ukraine and the Sino-US rivalry, both politicians and academics have begun to fear that Beijing may change its position, leading to a potential conflict in the Strait. This essay aims to survey the origin and nature of the Taiwan Question, analyze Beijing's policy toward Taiwan, and argue that its essence remains unchanged – prioritizing a Peaceful Reunification.

**Keywords:** Beijing's Taiwan Policy, China, Cross-strait relations, Taiwan

## 1. Introduction

In the Indo-Pacific area, Taiwan (officially the Republic of China, ROC) is an important link for regional security. For Beijing (People's Republic of China, PRC), carrying out the reunification of the country is a key task of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and of the state. From the era of Mao Zedong to the 'New Era' of Xi Jinping, Beijing has consistently maintained its intention to recover this island, despite facing domestic and international obstacles. The Taiwan Question is complex. On the one hand, in legal terms, it is a legacy of China's internal affairs. On the other hand, although the matter does not concern international relations, it has nevertheless always been influenced by international factors, namely the positioning and involvement of the United States.

Against the backdrop of heightened rivalry between the PRC and the US, increased independent tendencies within the island, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, politicians and academics alike fear military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait and worry about Beijing's



stance towards Taiwan: Will reunification be pursued through violent means? Has Beijing's policy towards the island changed?

By explaining the origin of the Taiwan Question and arguing its importance to China within the context of Chinese traditions, this essay seeks to analyze the CPC's policy towards Taiwan, offering a deeper understanding of the current situation across the Strait.

## 2. Taiwan-Question

The island of Taiwan has been under the direct administration of China since 1662, in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).<sup>6</sup> At the end of the Qing dynasty (1632-1912), the Chinese court was weak vis-à-vis Western powers and most of the country was divided into areas of foreign influence/governance. According to the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Qing court ceded Taiwan to Japan in 1895, marking the beginning of the Japanese rule of Taiwan. In 1912, the Republic of China was founded on the Chinese mainland, succeeding the Qing court.

Prior to the establishment of the PRC, the ROC was the recognized regime and legitimate representative of China. With the Allied victory in World War II, Taiwan was returned to China – represented by the ROC – in 1945. At the same time, the ROC lost the civil war with the CPC forces and thus moved its regime to Taiwan in 1949, setting the intention to reconquer the Chinese mainland in the future.

Meanwhile, the ROC continued to regard itself as the only legitimate regime in all of China and, until the 1980s, maintained official relations with many countries on China's behalf. In fact, even at present, legally there is no Taiwanese state or regime, its official name continues to be "Republic of China", with Nanjing as the legal capital, instead of Taipei. Moreover, the ROC

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<sup>6</sup> These dates look like confusing: in fact, the Ming dynasty officially died out in 1644, yet Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga) and his descendants continued to rule Taiwan on behalf of the Ming until 1683.

constitution still claims sovereignty over all of China (including various parts of Russia and Mongolia), while in terms of *de facto* territory, the regime only controls the island of Taiwan and several islands and reefs in Fujian province and the South China Sea.

Considering these historical and political facts, it becomes evident that the nature of the Taiwan Question is an internal Chinese matter, i.e., it concerns two opposing regimes rather than two separate countries. The key issue here refers to the interpretation of the word "China". This ambiguity is clear in the 1992 Consensus, in which the two sides of the Taiwan Strait acknowledge belonging to one China without specifying the political connotations of that term. The Consensus is a result of astute Chinese (both PRC and ROC) political intelligence. On the one hand, both regimes recognize the one-China principle, which serves as a bedrock for the development of future relations between mainland China and Taiwan. On the other hand, the ambiguity in interpreting the meaning of "China" shows flexibility. Beijing "accepts", albeit reluctantly, a Taiwan on behalf of the Republic of China, since it is still "China" (Pan, 2019).

However, with the rise of the independent trend and the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) dominance in Taiwan, the nature of the Taiwan Question began to change. Previously under Kuomintang rule, the question revolved around the opposition of two regimes which Beijing, although disliking, still tolerated. The dominance of the DPP, a party aiming to establish a Republic of Taiwan to replace the ROC, brings essential changes. For instance, in 2006, then-leader Chen Shui-bian abolished the ROC's National Unification Council; in 2018, Tsai Ing-wen publicly rejected the 1992 Consensus (Lee, 2020); in 2020, the name "Republic of China" was replaced by "Taiwan" on passports; and more recently, there are plans to change the name of "China Airlines" to something like "Taiwan Airlines". Therefore, the DPP, along with other separatist forces, seeks to de-Sinicize Taiwan, disassociating the island from being considered Chinese. Compared to the ambiguity of the interpretation of "China", this stance is something Beijing cannot tolerate.

### 3. Beijing's Policy Towards Taiwan

#### 3.1 Why is Taiwan important to China?

There are various perspectives regarding this question: Beijing aims to gain geopolitical advantage in the Indo-Pacific; Beijing has hegemonic ambitions; Beijing wants to teach the US a lesson, and so on. Some of these assertions hold merit, since Taiwan plays a crucial role in the US policy of containing China, as it is part of the first island chain as an unsinkable aircraft carrier. Therefore, reunification with Taiwan would certainly bring geopolitical benefits to China, allowing it more space to react in a possible conflict in the Indo-Pacific. Moreover, the dot technology industry (e.g. semiconductors) in Taiwan would help China overcome economic and technological development challenges. However, these arguments primarily stem from the international perspective. From the Chinese standpoint, these are simply effects of reunification, not the fundamental reasons driving its pursuit.

The root of the country's reunification lies in Chinese traditions. First, at the micro level, the Chinese place a high value on the group spirit, as opposed to the individual spirit seen in some Western countries. In traditional Chinese culture, families live in a *jiazhang* (家长制/paternalist) system where all family members live under the same roof and any independence of a member would be considered irresponsible and a lack of respect. Second, Chinese culture values the concept of greatness. A great country must have a vast territory and sufficient population. There is a proverb *danwan zhidi* (弹丸之地) that refers to small countries with a derogatory meaning that is still widely used today. So, for someone growing up in this culture, it is difficult to understand Taiwan's independence: what is the point of a tiny island with little population and resources becoming an independent country? Would it not be better to reunite with China, a vast country with considerable wealth and one of the most powerful states in the world? This perspective is shared by both the CPC and the KMT in Taiwan. Third, as a millennia-old

civilization, China takes pride on its distinctive features and considers itself to have a certain superiority over others. In East Asian history, China has been considered somewhat as the mother of other countries – for example, Japan, Korea and Vietnam all have roots from Chinese culture. Therefore, China has always been admired by others. And now Taiwan wants to stop being Chinese? Additionally, considering Japan's historical influence on Taiwan, the island's independence is closely connected to China's national pride. The independence of Taiwan would have a negative impact on China's unification and stability, as it may encourage other separatist forces in the country to follow suit: "Should Taiwan be independent from China's political perimeter, it would send a signal of encouragement to other Chinese separatist movements, such as the Hong Kong indigenization movement, the Tibetan independence drive, and Xinjiang's separatist force" (Lee, 2020, p. 204-205). These factors are far more important to China than the geopolitical benefits that reunification could bring.

### 3.2 Analysis of Beijing's Policy towards Taiwan: from Mao to Xi

In the early 1950s, the Red regime had the following slogan: "liberating Taiwan with force (**武力解放台湾**)". In other words, it aimed to defeat Chang Kai-shek's regime in Taiwan through armed means, as was the case in other Chinese provinces. However, in 1955, Zhou Enlai began advocating for "peaceful liberation (**和平解放**)". Several reasons contributed to this shift (Li, 1996). Firstly, Taiwan (ROC) signed a mutual defense agreement with the US and Beijing did not want to get into another direct war with Washington. Secondly, with the completion of socialist reforms, the CPC's focus became economic and social development. As such, a military conquest of Taiwan, which would incur substantial costs, was no longer a viable economic option. Subsequently, in 1963, Zhou Enlai systematically summarized Taiwan policy as "*yigang simu*" (**一纲四目**/One Principle and Four Points), the essence of which is that Beijing is open to negotiate anything with Taiwan as long as it reunifies with the mainland.

In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping introduced the famous “One Country Two Systems (OCTS)” doctrine and replaced “peaceful liberation” with “peaceful reunification”, advancing the Taiwan resolution. Firstly, OCTS is the first and so far the only technical approach proposed to achieve a peaceful reunification. At the time, both sides were hoping for the reunification of the country, and it was Deng who first provided a clear framework for it. Secondly, the shift from “liberation” to “reunification” reflects Beijing’s benevolence to respect the existing institutions in Taiwan following reunification. For those who study Chinese affairs, mastering the Chinese language is important since Chinese political discourse has significant implications. “Liberation (解放)” entails an ideological component, signifying Beijing’s perception of the regime in Taiwan as inferior compared to the socialist regime in the mainland. Conversely, “reunification” is a more modest term, indicating an equal position between Beijing and Taipei, thereby avoiding any connotations of superiority (Sun, 2006). After Deng, his successors, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and the current Xi Jinping, have also put forward their orientations on the Taiwan resolution. The essence of these guidelines has rarely changed, so we divide Beijing’s policy towards Taiwan into two approaches: resolution through force or by peaceful means.

Before 1955, Beijing’s approach was to employ force to liberate the people in Taiwan from a “reactionary” regime. After 1955 and up to the present day, Beijing prioritizes peaceful resolution, while not excluding the use of force in an extreme case. Therefore, on the one hand, Beijing places its hope in the people of Taiwan, rather than in the regime, and employs soft approaches to attract the masses of people in Taiwan, fostering interdependence for integrated development on both sides. On the other hand, Beijing continues to use military tactics to deter the DPP regime and the US. These military operations, which include rehearsals and exercises near the island, are a result of two variables: the political situation on the island and relations between Taiwan and Washington. Therefore, during periods of harmonious relations between both the two sides of the Strait, for instance during the Ma Ying-jeou administration, there were

fewer military operations. Now, with the DPP administration and increasing ties between Taiwan and other countries, notably the US, Beijing is escalating its military tactics and has even formally rejected the middle line in the Strait. These military tactics, even if only to deter the DPP regime, cause negative impressions and discomfort within the island, and eventually may even stimulate the determination of the Taiwanese masses to defend their land (Lin, 2019).

However, from a long-term perspective, the Taiwan Question finds itself in an awkward situation. Beijing is determined to achieve the reunification of the country, but both the 1992 Consensus and the OCTS plan face resistance in Taiwan. Resorting to the use of force is not appropriate either, as both sides are Chinese and the international consequences would be severe. On the Taiwan side, Tsai's administration has made a significant mistake by never taking the Taiwan Question seriously – as it is not a question of whether it wants to or not, it is a real problem that cannot be ignored – and by not establishing formal contact between Beijing and Taipei. The DPP likely avoids discussing the issue since, according to them, Taiwan is already *de facto* independent. However, from a realistic standpoint, "if one part omits the signal given by another part, there is a risk of misperception and eventually a dramatic confrontation" (Guan, 2022, p. 5).

In this scenario, Xi's administration, which is more ambitious than those before it in pursuing a peaceful resolution, is taking more assertive actions to gain dominance in Strait affairs. Firstly, it is intensifying its use of military tactics, particularly in response to perceived offenses (for example, Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan). While it can be said that military operations are becoming more frequent, this does not signal an impending war, since Beijing is also implementing unprecedented sympathetic measures aimed at benefiting the Taiwanese population in general. In 2018, Beijing enacted 31 measures in favor of the people of Taiwan, providing them with equal or even better conditions than citizens of mainland China in various areas, including education, employment and health. In a sense, Beijing is employing a

multifaceted approach to bring Taiwan closer, encompassing implications of realism (military tactics), liberalism (economic interdependence) and constructivism (emphasizing cultural connection).

#### 4. Conclusion

It can be said that Beijing's policy towards Taiwan is coherent in essence, with technical adjustments according to the political situation on the island and the geopolitical context on both sides of the Pacific. Xi's administration displays greater ambition to achieve the reunification of the country, as such it is stepping up its promotion of both military tactics and soft measures.

Given the limitations of this essay's length, there is no enough space to elaborate on the issues in depth, however, it provides an introduction to the Taiwan Question and argues that while the nature of the Question is changing due to separatism on the island, the essence of Beijing's Taiwan policy, namely the prioritization of a peaceful resolution, has not changed. However, from a long-haul point of view, the Taiwan Question will inevitably take on a new direction, contingent on the political intelligence of the two sides.

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Anex

<b>Beijing's Taiwan Policy</b>		
<b>Timeline&amp; Essence</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Specific Points</b>
1949-1955 Armed means	Liberation with force	/
1955 to Now Peaceful Resolution (without excluding the armed means)	1955-1979 Peaceful liberation	<p><b>Mao Zedong &amp; Zhou Enlai: “One Principle &amp; Four Points”</b>                      One Principle: Taiwan is part of China                      Four Points: 1. After reunification, all affairs, except foreign affairs, of Taiwan can continue to be administrated by Taiwan local authority. 2. All military and construction costs, any shortfall, are subsidized by the central government 3. Taiwan's social reform can be delayed until conditions are ready 4. Both sides agreed not to send spies to destroy each other's stability.                      Original in Chinese: <a href="https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hans/一纲四目">https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-hans/一纲四目</a></p>
	Since 1979 Peaceful Reunification based on “One Country Two Systems (OCTS)”	<p><b>Deng Xiaoping: “Six Points”</b>                      1. The nature of Taiwan Question is the reunification of the country. 2. The political systems can be different but only the PRC has the right to represent China internationally. 3. A full autonomy of Taiwan is not practical. 4. OCTS is a good way to resolve the Taiwan Question. Under OCTS, Taiwan can have its own administration, military force and the central government leave vacancies to Taiwan politicians. 5. Reunify the country by Three Principles of the People is not practical. 6. There should be an equal negotiation between CPC and Kuomintang.                      Original in Chinese: <a href="https://www.mj.org.cn/mjzt/twzt/tydy_1/dtygzz/200409/t20040921_26487.htm">https://www.mj.org.cn/mjzt/twzt/tydy_1/dtygzz/200409/t20040921_26487.htm</a></p>
		<p><b>Jiang Zemin: “Eight Points”</b>                      1. The principle of One China is the fundamental base of peaceful reunification. 2. Taiwan can develop cultural and economic relations internationally, but not in politic affairs. 3. The two parts could start the negotiation of peaceful negotiation. 4. A peaceful resolution is very important for the Chinese people in both sides, but Beijing never excludes the use of force which is exclusively against foreign forces' attempts to interfere with China's reunification and "Taiwan independence". 5. Develop cross-strait economic exchanges and cooperation. 6. The Chinese culture is an important nexus to maintain the link between people of the two sides. 7. Fully respect the rights of the people in Taiwan. 8. Leaders of the Taiwan authorities are welcome to visit in an appropriate way.                      Original in Chinese: <a href="https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/江八点">https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/江八点</a></p>
		<p><b>Hu Jintao: “Four Points”</b>                      1. We will not waver in our insistence on the one-China principle. 2. We will not give up our efforts to achieve peaceful reunification. 3. We will not change our policy of placing our hope in the people of Taiwan. 4. We will not compromise on our opposition to Taiwan independence.                      Original in Chinese: <a href="https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/胡四点">https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/胡四点</a></p>

		<p><b>Xi Jinping: “Five Points”</b></p> <p>1. Promote national rejuvenation and achieve the goal of peaceful reunification. 2. Explore the "OCTS" Taiwan proposal and enrich the practice of peaceful reunification. 3. Adhere to the one-China principle and safeguard the prospect of peaceful reunification (without excluding the use of force). 4. Deepen cross-strait integration and development and solidify the foundation for peaceful reunification. 5. To realize the spiritual integration of compatriots and enhance the identity of peaceful reunification.</p> <p>Original in Chinese: <a href="https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh/习五条">https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh/习五条</a></p>
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\*Due to the page limitation, the translated points above are summarized. We strongly recommend reading the original ones by full.

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CHINA'S  
INTEREST IN THE  
2023  
SOUTHEAST  
ASIAN GAMES IN  
CAMBODIA

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# China's interest in the 2023 Southeast Asian Games in Cambodia

HUGO COUTINHO GONÇALVES

## **Abstract**

As part of China's overarching strategy to project its regional and global influence, the Belt and Road Initiative stands as the new cornerstone of the global economic order. Through this initiative, China assumes a leadership role, leveraging economic, cultural, and public diplomacy, which includes sports diplomacy.

Cambodia, undoubtedly, supports the Chinese initiative, primarily for economic reasons and due to Chinese investments in the country, encompassing security, infrastructure, industry and cooperation in national development. The Southeast Asian Games project enabled Cambodia to enhance its economic competitiveness, diversify its sources of growth and expand its horizons, ultimately improving its international reputation.

In Southeast Asia, sports serve as a significant means of fostering social integration and building relationships, reflecting the diverse ethnic and religious identities of the region. It is also utilized as a tool for establishing and developing diplomatic relations, especially in the case under examination, involving China's interest in the Southeast Asian Games, recently held in Cambodia.

**Keywords:** China; Cambodia; Sports Diplomacy; Soft Power; 2023 Southeast Asian Games.

## **1. Introduction**

The Southeast Asian Games, often abbreviated as SEA Games, is a biennial multi-sport event that brings together athletes from Southeast Asian nations. It is one of the most significant sporting events in the region and organised by the Southeast Asian Games Federation (SEAGF), which is composed of 11 member countries, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Focused on fostering athletic competition and camaraderie among Southeast Asian nations, the SEA Games, traditionally, take place over a span of about two weeks.

The use of sports by China as a significant tool of foreign policy constitutes an essential analysis for understanding sports diplomacy in its entirety. Thus, the application of Chinese soft power, including its thriving Belt and Road Initiative project, and their interconnection with China's influence in Cambodia, form a central dimension of the analysis. To this, a specific perspective of alignment with sports, and consequently, with the Southeast Asian Games in Cambodia in 2023, in which China inevitably played a part, is subsequently added.

China is Cambodia's most important strategic and economic partner, and Cambodia views China's rise as an opportunity to address various gaps in governance, economics, trade, and social aspects, thereby developing autonomy in the face of a challenging international landscape.

In this way, this article will address how China is involved in the SEA Games, and for what purpose, evaluating the associated interests, even though not participating directly in the competition.

## **2. Framework**

Diplomacy, regarded as the skill of managing influence, represents a shift in global dynamics, whereas contemporary diplomacy revolves around maintaining equilibrium between the realms of conflict and harmony. The choices stemming from diplomatic efforts exert a substantial impact on the forthcoming domestic and international strategies of nations (Kissinger, 1994).

The core role of diplomacy is to advocate for and safeguard a nation's interests on the global stage. Simultaneously, the cultivation of a collection of customs, routines, regulations and perspectives upholds the protection and subsequent strengthening of these interests within the international arena (Mongiardim, 2007).

According to Mongiardim (2007), the concept of public diplomacy came into existence in the United States around 1965. It pertained to the initiatives undertaken by the government to encourage interaction between different populations, encourage mutual comprehension, and shape a positive external image of a nation, its people, culture, and policies. This was done with the aim of enhancing a favourable image that could serve the broader national interests. Notably, public diplomacy stands in stark contrast to traditional diplomacy, which is characterized by confidentiality and secrecy.

Public diplomacy is intricately connected to soft power, diverging from merely engaging with other countries' governments to actively aiming to sway and engage with foreign publics. It does so through a well-structured strategy and appealing policies. Public diplomacy serves as the instrument through which governments showcase their values, culture, and foreign policies to the global community, thereby acquiring soft power (Nye, 2008).

The concept of soft power is it's vital to understand China's interest in the SEA Games, since it refers to a country's ability to influence the behaviour of other countries through cultural, political and economic means. And clearly, the organisation of this major event was greatly influenced by the manoeuvring of the Chinese government.

The use of sports as a diplomatic tool is an example of soft power and we can observe this with the case we are analysing, which has once again served China's regional affirmation.

As delineated by Murray (2012), sports diplomacy denotes the strategic utilization of athletes and sporting events as instruments for actively involving, educating, and cultivating a positive image among international audiences and entities. The primary aim of this practice is to influence their perspectives in a manner that aligns more favourably with the overarching foreign policy goals of governments. This underscored reality emphasises the significance of sports diplomacy, highlighting it as a potent avenue through which a nation can pursue and attain its foreign policy objectives alongside various other available strategies.

Countries often harness the global spotlight, cultural elements and the widely recognized values embedded in sports as a potent instrument of soft power. Their aim is to enhance public diplomacy efforts and advance their international objectives. The strategic deployment of sports diplomacy for this specific purpose provides viable avenues for moulding a nation's image, redefining its position, and assuming a noteworthy and respected role on the international stage. In this case, we are witnessing the use of soft power and sports diplomacy by the Chinese government, actively participating in the background of the organisation of the aforementioned edition of the SEA Games.

A robust link exists between sports diplomacy and the concept of soft power, wherein the strategic utilization of sports can bolster a nation's soft power by fostering a favourable international image and perception. In essence, by championing sports events

and providing support to athletes, nations have the capacity to convey their core values, culture, and identity, fostering unity among diverse populations and forging trust-based relationships that contribute to securing a stable standing and international recognition (Nye, 2004). Consequently, this can lead to enhanced political and economic sway, ultimately facilitating the realization of a nation's foreign policy objectives.

### **3. The Southeast Asian Games**

The Southeast Asian Games are an event held every two years to celebrate regional friendship and cooperation. They have been held since 1959, almost a decade before the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Initially, they were called the Southeast Asian Peninsular Games. There have been a total of 32 editions, with almost all ASEAN member states having hosted them. The last edition took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, between 12 and 23 May 2023, with Vietnam being the most decorated country.

In addition to showcasing regional familiarity, sharing olympic rituals, and receiving extensive media coverage, the Southeast Asian Games have also revealed over the years a lack of sportsmanship among the nations. This has led to numerous controversies in the organisation of the events. Controversies have been associated with threats of withdrawal and strategic selection of sports by host nations, emphasizing the idea that the national interests of these countries outweigh the overall goal of rewarding those who perform better athletically. This compromises the general objective of unity and regional cooperation in the Southeast Asian Games.

All events involve significant logistical investment in terms of organising and developing infrastructure and providing conducive conditions for the event itself. It is essential to adhere to the necessary international standards and regulations for hosting this type of sporting event. In this specific case, China's resources and its experience in organising international events were the main foundation for Cambodia.

### **4. The 2023 Southeast Asian Games**

Following the declaration made by Thong Khon, who serves as the head of the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia, regarding Cambodia's selection as the host nation for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Southeast Asian Games during the Southeast Asian Games Federation Council



meeting in Singapore in 2015, China promptly extended a financial aid proposal. The Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has expressed his sincere thanks to China for helping along the process, especially in the construction of the main stadium complex and other infrastructure, amounting to an estimated investment of 150 million US dollars (Khmer Times, 2023).

The 32<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Southeast Asian Games took place successfully, with 6210 athletes from 11 participating nations competing in 40 different sports disciplines. The event was held across five cities designated for specific sports, including the capital, Phnom Penh, and the provinces of Siem Reap, Kep, Sihanoukville, and Kampot. The event proved to be a new historic chapter for the development of sports in Cambodia.

The event's motto was based on the expression "Sport: Live in Peace," which represents Cambodia's journey from a country torn apart by conflicts to a respected member of the Southeast Asian community. Furthermore, the motto can be understood as emphasising the role that sports play in promoting peace and friendship among the countries in the region. As for the main feature of the logo, it included the presence of four dragons and a reference to Angkor Wat, the famous Cambodian temple, both well-known symbols of Cambodia. The event's mascots were two rabbits dressed in Cambodian uniforms, one red and one blue, reflecting the colors of the Kingdom's flag (Senase, 2020).

For nearly two millennia, the Cambodians have developed, through the syncretism of indigenous animistic beliefs and the Indian religions of Buddhism and Hinduism, a unique Khmer culture and belief system. In this way, they aim to preserve their culture and were able to share it amicably with the other participating nations in the Southeast Asian Games, serving to promote knowledge, skills, and cultural exchange on a regional and international stage. Additionally, it has contributed to the development of sports itself with the goal of achieving recognition and prestige for Cambodia, something accomplished through peaceful and exemplary organisation of the event.

The comprehensive vision that Cambodia has been embracing, especially concerning matters related to the organisation and success of the Southeast Asian Games, has translated into the Kingdom's maturation and has assisted in the decision-making process across various domains, including the formulation of both domestic and foreign policies. Their financial commitment, the ongoing administrative discussions, and even the simple adoption and implementation of new technologies associated with the event, such

as an extensive advertising campaign, a mobile digital platform, and the extensive media coverage of the event by national, regional and international media outlets, served as the beginning of a new hopeful and promising phase, providing recognition and allowing Cambodia to gain increased visibility (Manjunath, 2018).

The Morodok Techo National Stadium, the competition's main infrastructure, was constructed by the China State Construction Engineering Corporation and it is a part of the Belt and Road Initiative project. The stadium's design is based on the traditional Cambodian dragon boat structure and features an imitation in the shape of the Namaste hand gesture, a symbol of the Cambodian religion. In this way, the stadium symbolizes the thousands of years of ties between China and Cambodia, serving as a symbol of the significant Chinese project and the historical relationship between the two countries.

In this context, the sports arena and its adjacent complex, WorldBridge Sport Village, were the centerpiece of the SEA Games and will serve as the main attraction for local and international sports federations to choose Cambodia for training or hosting events in the future. It is functioning as an integrated multisport community, as well as a hub for commerce and residences, where the local population and visitors can live, work, leisurely stroll, and maintain their well-being in a lush environment that reflects Cambodian tradition and culture but with a more modern outlook. The complex includes hotels, apartments, a water park, a safari park, a golf course as well as healthcare and educational facilities, all combining to make it an appealing destination. Phnom Penh will transform into a modern residential, commercial and sports metropolis that is self-sustaining, welcoming and captivating.

From the transmission of knowledge and expertise in the organisation of the opening and closing ceremonies of the competition to matters related to production and technology, including security plans, China played a crucial role in assisting Cambodia throughout the entire process (Radio Free Asia, 2023).

As part of the event organisation plan and, logically, due to its resources and training and logistical capabilities, China was also involved in the training of athletes, coaching staff and technical officials who were part of Cambodia's sports team, resulting in a very positive result for Cambodia, finishing the competition in fourth place in the overall table, with 81 gold medals, 74 silver and 127 bronze. Furthermore, China is currently engaged in a similar initiative, involving the training of over a hundred Cambodian athletes,

with the ultimate objective of securing medals for them at the upcoming 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the Asian Games, slated to take place in China between 23<sup>rd</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023 (Nai, 2023).

Cambodia holds a highly significant geographical position in Southeast Asia, emerging as a cornerstone of the current Maritime Silk Road and maintaining a close friendship with the Chinese. As a result, China can freely explore the oil reserves in the Gulf of Tonkin and project the exploration of hydrocarbon and oil reserves in Cambodia through the China National Offshore Oil Corporation. Other influential Chinese companies and the Chinese government itself have also been investing in dozens of projects in the country across various sectors such as industrial sector, agriculture, tourism and more. This underscores the considerable economic and strategic importance attributed to China's rise (Vietnam Plus, 2023).

It's important to highlight that China and Cambodia's relations gained momentum after both nations established a Strategic Partnership in 2010. Since then, there has been remarkable progress in developing infrastructure across Cambodia as part of the Belt and Road Initiative project. This development includes significant initiatives like the Sihanoukville Economic Zone and the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, which involves building a highway that spans the entire kingdom. This highway has greatly expedited the movement of goods and people, making it faster and more economically feasible. This reduction in transportation costs has also contributed to increasing the Kingdom's competitive advantage (Chheang, 2017).

Economically, China plays an increasingly significant role in Cambodia's socio-economic development, acting as its primary trade partner, the largest source of foreign direct investment, and the leading provider of development assistance and concessional loans (Williamson, 2023). The Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank have provided and will continue to provide substantial benefits to Cambodia. The 2023 SEA Games serves as evidence of the connection and the pursuit of advantages for all parties involved.

China's investment in ASEAN countries is a reality, and Cambodia stands out as one of the key beneficiaries. China is the Kingdom's largest investor, and bilateral trade has recently reached record levels (MOFCOM, 2023). Through this investment, China aims to foster the country's growth and secure a beneficial return in the medium to long term.

Chinese tourists are the ones who visit Cambodia the most, and have the country as a favourite for their trips, a testament to the strong relationship between the two nations, with these figures expected to only increase (Pradeep, 2023).

Chinese investments and a massive Chinese presence in the Kingdom have had a significant impact on both domestic and foreign policies, leading to a trend towards autocratic governance. Furthermore, these developments have also triggered conspicuous long-term environmental and sociocultural changes due to Chinese influence, which could enable Cambodia to become an inclusive, progressive, and sustainable nation but may also introduce associated challenges.

Cambodia, by not asserting itself, could see its sovereignty and foreign policy autonomy compromised, given its strategic alignment with China. While this alignment is in accordance with its security and development objectives, the asymmetry in the China-Cambodia bilateral relationship could expose Cambodia to strategic risks and vulnerabilities. It becomes imperative to develop medium and long-term strategies, for example by becoming an active member of ASEAN and playing a role in promoting the centrality of this organisation in Southeast Asia. This creates a conducive environment for consolidating its relationships with other major powers in Asia and beyond, thereby adopting a self-reliant and omni-directional foreign policy strategy in the long run.

According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy report, Cambodia has a debt to China that exceeds 25% of its GDP, and it is projected to continue increasing. In this regard, Cambodia must take a stance to avoid becoming entirely ensnared by China. Sri Lanka and Zambia serve as pertinent examples where debts to China have been used as a geoeconomic tool to coerce indebted nations into granting strategic facilities to the Chinese government, the deep-water port and the air centre, respectively (Chansambath, 2019).

We have witnessed the strengthening of Cambodia's international reputation as it made significant efforts to host one of the best-ever editions of the Southeast Asian Games. This has garnered international attention and attracted tourists and investors, which will stimulate the economy and create employment opportunities for Cambodians, thus fostering social, cultural, and economic prosperity in the Kingdom.

Following a successful event and substantial investments, Cambodia's aspirations extend beyond its recent achievements. The nation intends to leverage its acquired infrastructure and expertise to become a prominent player in hosting additional sporting events within the region. This strategic move aims to position Cambodia as a prosperous and capable country worth monitoring closely. A tangible illustration of this commitment is Cambodia's selection as the host nation for the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Youth Games (AYG) expected to happen in 2029.

## **5. China's interest in Cambodia 2023 SEA Games**

Even though China was not a participating country in the competition, it played a key role in making it happen. Its interest can therefore be attributed to several factors from its wider diplomatic, economic and regional objectives. It has proved to be a way for China to get involved and maintain a strong presence in the Southeast Asian region, foster positive relations and promote its interests in various aspects beyond sport.

China values its diplomatic relations with countries in the Southeast Asian region, including Cambodia, so supporting and showing interest in events like the SEA Games can help strengthen diplomatic ties and promote goodwill between China and Cambodia. Sporting events like the SEA Games provide opportunities for cultural exchange and people-to-people connections, that's why China's interest in these Games can be seen as a way to promote cultural ties and exchanges with Cambodia and other Southeast Asian nations. In this way, participate, even indirectly, in the SEA Games allowed China to demonstrate its commitment to regional stability and cooperation.

China has a strong interest in sports, and its athletes often excel in various disciplines. While not directly participating in the SEA Games, China may have an interest in the development of sports in the region, including providing support, training, or technical assistance to athletes or sports infrastructure, and this will also enable the country to improve its sporting performance in the long term and get more people to practice sports in the region, encouraging the population and creating suitable conditions.

Participating or support sports events can enhance a country's soft power and improve its image on the international stage. China's interest in the SEA Games may be part of a broader strategy to strengthen its soft power and reputation in the region,

demonstrating that they are always available to help in various aspects of their growth as nations.

In turn, it is well known that China has significant economic interests in Cambodia, including investments in infrastructure, trade, and development projects. The SEA Games have therefore served as an opportunity for China to highlight its presence and contributions to Cambodia's development thus marking a historic event in the country's history after 64 years of waiting.

## **6. Conclusion**

The impact of China on the international stage is increasingly visible. The expansion of its strategic space and its exemplary economic and trade alignment translate into a benefit for both China and the other countries involved.

Sports diplomacy goes far beyond athletes or the events themselves, it provides countries with the opportunity to shape their image, allowing them to also assume a significant role on the global stage. In this specific case, we witnessed China's investment in an event that turned out to be beneficial for the organiser, Cambodia, and for China itself. By implementing its good neighbour and development policies, China has strengthened regional relations and cooperation and connectivity among Southeast Asian nations.

The 2023 Southeast Asian Games, held in Cambodia, were an important milestone in the history of relations between the two countries. The event itself had a special significance for the Kingdom of Cambodia and its development, and China is directly involved in this program, thus reaping benefits beyond the event.

Among the benefits, we can highlight the reinforcement of diplomatic relations, economic interests on the part of China, cultural exchange, the objective of regional stability and the demonstration of its influence in the region, the strengthening of the sports sector in the region and the good example of the use of sports diplomacy with the aim of reinforcing the country's soft power and acting as another manoeuvre to improve its international image.

Cambodia's confidence in the Chinese project and the organisation of the event have allowed the Kingdom to reinforce its ideologies and assume a cohesive governance, centred on infrastructure and socio-economic development, subsequently improving the living conditions of the population, who will benefit from the investment made. In this way,

it will be possible to diversify sources of growth and maximise opportunities, while also contributing to Cambodia's regional integration and connectivity, as well as establishing a recognised international image, a process in the making for a country seeking to establish itself on the world scene.

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FROM OUTSIDER  
TO INTERNAL  
CHALLENGER:  
CHINA'S  
TRAJECTORY IN  
THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
REGIME

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# From Outsider to Internal Challenger: China's Trajectory in the International Human Rights Regime

DIOGO MACHADO

## Abstract

This essay presents a brief historical overview of China's interactions with the human rights regime over time. Initially an outsider, China pursued a quiet participation in the regime until the Tiananmen crackdowns in the late 1980s, which brought intense global condemnation of China's human rights record. However, China skillfully managed to deflect criticism and public pressure on human rights matters. In the early 2010s, China's low profile posture gave way to an assertive human rights diplomacy that unapologetically seeks to thwart human rights procedures at convenience and to shape human rights standards in line with Chinese views. This contribution documents this trajectory until today, hoping to shed light on China's strategies, tactics and goals regarding global human rights.

**Key words:** China, contestation, human rights, United Nations.

## 1. Introduction

At first glance, the fact that China is an active participant of the international human rights regime while systematically violating human rights at home is surprising and paradoxical. In fact, China's engagement with global human rights started more than four decades ago. Today, China is part of the majority of the most significant human rights treaties, embraced human rights protection in its discourse and domestic law, and participates actively in the main human rights fora, especially in the Human Rights Council, where it has undergone three rounds of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

This essay presents a short historical overview of China's interaction with human rights regime, which hopefully can contextualise and inform scholars, policy-makers and the broader public not only about China's trajectory, strategies and goals, but also about the challenge it is posing to global human rights.

## 2. Joining and laying low

The People's Republic of China (PRC) joined the United Nations (UN) in 1971, taking the Republic of China's seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC). Nonetheless, China maintained as little involvement with the UN human rights activities as possible, proceeding also with weak domestic application of its human rights obligations (Kent, 1999).

The process of 'reform and opening' in the late 1970s brought about the desire to become a more active participant in the international realm, marking also the beginning of China's interaction with the human rights regime (D. Chen, 2009). China acquired observer status at the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) in 1979, becoming a full member in 1982. Throughout the 1980s, it signed multiple international human rights treaties, including the Convention against Torture (CAT) in 1986 (OHCHR, 2023). Dingding Chen (2009) notes how China evinced a positive rhetorical attitude regarding the importance of human rights and the cooperation on the matter. However, China's domestic record did not significantly improve, which drove China to adopt a low profile in international human rights bodies, making scarce contributions to discussions and occasionally espousing notions of sovereignty and cultural relativism to protect itself from scrutiny of its human rights practices, which was basically inexistent until 1989 (Kent, 1999; Nathan, 2011). This was a period of 'emergent' (Inboden, 2021) or 'tentative' (Foot, 2000) participation in the human rights system.

## 3. Fighting global scrutiny

The violent Tiananmen crackdown on peaceful protestors in 1989 constituted a watershed moment in China's interaction with the human rights regime, bringing, arguably for the first time, China's human rights record to the 'forefront of global attention' (Foot, 2000, p. 256). This event attracted widespread condemnation, leading to the imposition of wide-ranging multilateral sanctions and to severed diplomatic ties with many countries (Nathan, 2011). The year 1989 witnessed the passing of the first resolution criticising China's human rights abuses in the UN (Inboden & Chen, 2012). The regime's immediate response was to decrease involvement in the human rights regime through a "total rejection of the regime's norms, its denial of their applicability to itself, and the mobilization of arguments invoking highly legalistic interpretations of sovereignty" (Kent, 1999, p. 234).

After this initial defensive approach, Beijing became acutely aware of the reputational and material consequences of being a human rights pariah, and realised that re-engaging with the human rights regime was the best strategy to avoid them (Foot, 2000). To prepare for this endeavour, it heavily sponsored and stimulated academic human rights research and discussion at home to develop its own human rights positions to defend itself internationally (Foot, 2000; Kent, 1999). The White Paper of 1991 is the first comprehensive display of China's official stance on human rights; subsequent White Papers were published over the years.

In this important statement in 1991, the PRC accepted the universality of human rights, but opposed the imposition of the same standards on all countries, calling for sensitivity to local conditions, argued that sovereignty could not be undermined by human rights promotion and scrutiny, and that the 'right to subsistence' was the most important right and the pre-requisite to all others (Kent, 1999; Kinzelbach, 2019). Kent (1999) notes how China repeatedly espoused these arguments in this period, considered the central elements of a very consistent human rights narrative over the years (Kinzelbach, 2019).

In a scenario of intense and persistent international scrutiny, China did not only promote this counter-narrative to deflect criticism, but also relentlessly fought to avoid the passing, or even the tabling, of critical resolutions of its human rights record. The PRC managed to prevent all the resolutions from even being voted through the approval of 'no-action motions', except for one in 1995, which was nevertheless defeated in the voting process (Inboden, 2021). China vigorously lobbied non-Western countries, building a reservoir of support that consistently helped Beijing to block UNCHR resolutions; in return, China defended these countries when they were criticised (Inboden, 2021; Nathan, 2011). China also used its global economic prowess to threaten and punish countries that supported or wanted to support critical resolutions (Kinzelbach, 2019).

#### **4. Seeking a low profile**

From the mid-1990s onwards, China offered to pursue bilateral human rights dialogues with Western countries and the European Union (EU) in exchange for reduced public pressure at the UN, and for the abandonment of resolutions (Inboden & Chen, 2012). The Western countries managed to extract some tactical concessions from China like the release of some political prisoners, and the signature of the International Covenant on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1997 (ratified in 2001) and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1998 (not yet ratified). In this period, China also received two visits of the Special Procedures, with whom it notably cooperated (Meng & Haina, 2020). These small concessions, though, were not accompanied by a significant move towards greater domestic compliance with human rights obligations.

The success of Beijing's efforts became evident in the beginning of the new millennium. Then, China faced reduced public human rights pressure as a consequence of the shift to bilateral venues' 'quiet diplomacy' and of the U.S.' focus on the 'war on terror' since 2001 (Inboden & Chen, 2012). The following decade marks a period of a low profile in the human rights system, made possible by the rare condemnation of China's human rights record. Notwithstanding, Beijing heavily invested in the negotiations of the Human Rights Council's (HRC) institutional design, a new human rights forum that replaced the UNCHR in 2006. Despite the rejection of some of its proposals, the Chinese delegation attained considerable successes like the geographical distribution of seats, which ensured continuous representation of like-minded governments, a large membership, the restriction of the human rights advisory body and of the confidential complaint procedure, and the defeat of proposals such as membership criteria tied to human rights performance and binding follow-up action as part of the UPR (Inboden & Chen, 2012; Inboden, 2021).

The PRC was now more effectively insulated from serious human rights pressure than ever. It has not even faced the threat of a resolution, managing also to impair the discussion of its human rights practices (see next section).

Until the early 2010s, China is reported to have held a relatively low profile in the HRC, rarely attending sessions, sticking to observing and studying the procedures, refraining from regular lobbying, from issuing big controversial public statements and from presenting its own sole authored resolutions (Sceats & Breslin, 2012).

## **5. Embracing assertiveness**

For many authors, Xi Jinping's China is said to have abandoned its traditional posture of keeping a low profile, exhibiting increasing confidence and proactiveness internationally in a quest to reclaim its centrality on the world stage and to reshape the global governance system (Economy, 2021; Shambaugh, 2020). Accordingly, many claim that China under Xi

has turned to a more assertive and proactive human rights foreign policy seeking to *fundamentally* alter international human rights standards and procedures in light of its human rights views (T. C. Chen, 2019; Foot, 2020; Wan, 2022).

Whereas China refrained from taking leadership in the HRC before, preferring to let like-minded countries carry the burden, it now exhibits greater confidence and initiative in pushing for its human rights conceptions and sponsoring its own resolutions (Foot, 2020; Inboden, 2021). Beijing is no longer afraid of fully using its growing economic and political clout to gain influence in multilateral mechanisms, and shape their procedures and underlying principles.

Even though the PRC is generally compliant with the formal procedures of the human rights regime, it often tries to thwart them in line with its interests. Many studies document that China has intimidated and harassed UN experts and staff to dissuade criticism, obstructed in many ways the participation of human rights defenders and NGOs in UN procedures (including harassment inside UN premises), and manipulated procedures to minimise condemnation of China's human rights record, for example, filling the UPR room with friendly countries to reduce the time for critical remarks (HRW, 2017). Additionally, Beijing has applied political and economic pressure to other governments to extract concessions on human rights matters (e.g., threatening them to not attend a side meeting on Xinjiang in 2019) and to discourage criticism of China. It has also consistently opposed the scrutiny and condemnation of its own and other developing countries' human rights records. China's positions are shared by many of these countries, so it is able to easily mobilise large coalitions of countries, especially the Like-Minded Group, to support its positions, and to block criticism and scrutiny (Inboden, 2022).

The last, and perhaps more innovative, tenet of China's new assertive human rights diplomacy are the resolute attempts to mainstream its human rights views, challenging and shaping existing human rights norms and principles (T. C. Chen, 2019). Since the late 2010s, China has actively and persistently promoted its human rights conception. China has vehemently opposed the legitimacy of monitoring specific countries' human rights situations, criticising also the specific ways in which such monitoring is conducted, and claimed that states should have full authority to implement human rights as they wish (Machado, forthcoming). It has also called for the increase of the investment in economic, social and cultural rights, arguing also sometimes that they should be prioritised over civil

and political rights, and for more tolerance for different paths of human rights implementation (Machado, forthcoming). Such ideas collide with reigning principles such as the universality and the indivisibility of human rights.

## 6. Conclusion

This essay documented China's trajectory in the international human rights regime. It is possible to conclude that China has participated *instrumentally* with the goals of avoiding condemnation of its human rights violations, and, more recently, of shaping human rights procedures and principles in line with its views.

Some NGOs and authors claim that China's activities have the intention and potential to essentially undermine the human rights system, aspiring to neutralise its ability to enforce human rights globally and to hold governments accountable for their violations (HRW, 2020; Richardson, 2020). China's fierce contestation from within, grounded on an increasing material power and wide support from large groups of countries, poses a formidable challenge to global human rights as we know them. I hope that this essay contributes to a broader understanding of this phenomenon.

## Acknowledgements

This essay is an adaptation of the literature review section of my MA Thesis, which will be publicly available soon. Thus, I would like to reiterate all the acknowledgements I made in the context of the thesis, thanking especially to my two supervisors Tobias ten Brink and Margrit Schreier.

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# BALANCING ACT: SOUTH KOREA'S RECURRING NUCLEAR DEBATE

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# Balancing Act: South Korea's Recurring Nuclear Debate

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## Abstract

2023 marked the 70th anniversary of the Korean War armistice, an event that led to the division of the Korean Peninsula. Within this divided landscape, North Korea has prominently positioned itself in the nuclear arena, continually advancing its nuclear and ballistic capabilities. Despite international efforts, progress towards denuclearization remains elusive. Concurrently, a reemerging discourse centers on South Korea's nuclear ambitions, questioning whether this divided nation should embark on a nuclear weapons program as a countermeasure to the persistent threat from its northern neighbor. This article briefly delves into the multifaceted dimensions of this debate, considering key factors influencing South Korea's nuclear policy posture: the looming North Korean threat, domestic considerations, the role of US security assurances, and their collective ramifications. It seeks to provide a short but comprehensive insight into an issue of profound significance, with ramifications for the security and stability of East Asia.

**Key words:** Korean Peninsula, South Korea, North Korea, Nuclear Proliferation

## 1. Introduction

In a speech on January 11, South Korea's conservative president Yoon Suk-yeol made headlines by alluding to the possibility of the United States (from now on, United States) redeployment of nuclear weapons to the peninsula to face with the ever-increasing threat from North Korea. If that wouldn't be possible, he added that there always existed the option for South Korea to look into acquiring their own nuclear weapons (Choe, 2023).

The debate surrounding South Korea's nuclear aspirations is not a novel occurrence and tends to emerge during times of heightened tension with North Korea (Einhorn & Kim, 2016). Nevertheless, this event marked the first instance when a serving South Korean president has broached the subject of the country contemplating the acquisition of nuclear weapons, a view commonly associated with more hawkish politicians and policy circles. Other calls for nuclear armament were already gaining traction, particularly among the ruling and conservative People Power Party (PPP) (Lee, 2022). Adding to this, a recent poll

has shown that there in fact exists domestic support for a nuclear weapons program (71% in 2022) (Dalton et al., 2022). This trend has persisted over time, with rare exceptions during periods of inter-Korean reconciliation (Dalton & Han, 2020; Einhorn & Kim, 2016; Sukin, 2020). All of this compounded by external factors such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, North Korean missile testing, China's growing nuclear arsenal, and fear of US abandonment or the possibility of "Donald Trump 2.0" have contributed to a deteriorating security situation. In turn, this has led to the reemergence of the nuclear debate in South Korea, bringing it into "mainstream" discourse (Cha, 2023), thus showing "an increased tolerance for casually suggesting nuclear proliferation" (Mohan, 2023).

The mounting nuclear debate was partially quelled with the Washington Declaration, adopted at the bilateral summit on 26 April by both President Yoon and US President Joe Biden<sup>1</sup>. While delivering a speech a few days later, President Yoon emphasized how the declaration was an upgraded version of the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty but now also "including nuclear weapons". However, he also swiftly stepped back from the possibility of South Korea going nuclear, given the potential economic and political implications such decision would impose on the country (H. Lee, 2023).

Bearing in mind these events, the Washington Declaration has served to temporarily assuage the nuclear debate in South Korea. However, critics of President Yoon have come forward, disapproving of his decision in giving up the nuclear option and "jettison South Korea's right to protect its sovereignty and people" ("Nuclear Deal with U.S. Tightens Korea's Shackles," 2023). Thus, it is crucial to delve further into this issue and conduct a critical analysis of South Korea's seemingly shifting posture in its recent nuclear posture.

## 2. Navigating South Korea's Nuclear Conundrum

UN Secretary-General António Guterres cautioned in August 2022 that the world had then entered "a time of nuclear danger not seen since the height of the Cold War" (United Nations, 2022). As a reminder of the horrific consequences of nuclear weapons, the

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<sup>1</sup> The Washington Declaration not only provided for giving South Korea a bigger voice when it comes to shared nuclear affairs in the alliance with the U.S, but also reinforced extended deterrence towards South Korea in the face of a mounting North Korean threat and South Korea's own nonproliferation commitments. ("Washington Declaration," 2023).

Declaration that was adopted by the G7, whose leaders met in Hiroshima for their annual summit on May 19-21, 2023, underscored their will to promote “disarmament and non-proliferation efforts, towards the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons” (“G7 Hiroshima Leaders’ Communiqué,” 2023).

Nevertheless, efforts towards strengthening the global nuclear nonproliferation regime have suffered a significant setback in recent years. Despite rhetorical commitments, none of the nuclear-weapons states have supported the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in 2021. Likewise, non-nuclear states such as Japan — a strong proponent of non-proliferation in theory — have opted out of supporting this treaty due to their security alliance with the US, deemed essential for their own national security. Even though the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) continues to bind the international non-proliferation regime together, several obstacles have led credence to the idea that its binding power has been weakening in recent decades, an example being North Korea’s withdrawal from the treaty back in 2003 and its expanding nuclear and ballistic program since then, but also a lack of commitment from nuclear states in endorsing disarmament efforts (Huang, 2023).

While North Korea continues to develop its nuclear and ballistic arsenal to primarily face what it perceives as external threats to its regime, repercussions are felt in the Southern part of the Korean Peninsula as well, with a consequent impact on South Korea’s security calculus. During a pivotal period in the 1970s, due to fear of US abandonment and increasingly provocative attacks from the North Korean side, South Korea actively pursued an indigenous nuclear program. However, it was ultimately pressured by the US to embark on a non-nuclear trajectory by joining the NPT. This issue made a comeback in 2004 when the IAEA discovered hidden nuclear activities pursued by Seoul a few years back with ensuing speculation over whether the then Kim Dae-jung Administration (progressive) was directly involved in this process (Sanger & Broad, 2004).

Thus, South Korea’s ongoing nuclear debate can be seen as example of the waning trust in the international non-proliferation regime, with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine reinforcing the idea that possessing a nuclear deterrent is the ultimate weapon to deter possible invasions or attacks. However, in the Korean context, this represents the persistence of a nuclear debate that has existed — in varying degrees — since the division of the nation in two halves. South Korea boasts an advanced civilian nuclear program and

plays a key role in exporting these technologies worldwide. While some have pointed out that South Korea abiding by the NPT serves as an effective brake in South Korea's restraint in going nuclear, others have started pointing out that the country could actually "get away with the bomb" despite economic and political consequences (Pardo, 2023).

When examining South Korea's nuclear ambitions, whether in the 1970s or in the present day, it is customary to ascribe its origins to the extent and nature of US security commitments (Kim, 2018; Kim, 2001; Sukin, 2020; Work, 2023). This article will not disregard the role played by the US-South Korea (from now on, US-ROK) alliance and the "nuclear umbrella", but it aims at shedding light onto additional factors that help explain South Korea's shifting nuclear posture — the impact of the North Korean threat and domestic politics, more specifically the interplay of ideological divisions within South Korea's political landscape, as well as the notion of prestige and national identity, as influential elements shaping the nation's nuclear ambitions.

### **3. The Impact of North Korea and external forces**

Even though both Koreas remain divided at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, dynamics of South Korean politics are intricately intertwined with events transpiring in the northern region of the peninsula, and conversely, developments in North Korea significantly impact South Korea.

This dynamic can be seen in the nuclear realm as the North Korean threat remains the most explicit factor motivating South Korea's reemerging nuclear debate due to Pyongyang's steady development of its nuclear and missile capabilities. Similar to previous years, the ramping-up of testing of these weapons since 2022 have heighten security concerns in South Korea, with North Korea making its nuclear status "irreversible" and enshrining into law the right of conducting a preemptive strike (Reddy, 2023). This series of events have led to increased support namely from the conservative side of the South Korean political spectrum for some form of nuclear deterrent (be it in the form of an independent nuclear force, nuclear sharing with the US or redeployment of nuclear weapons) as a means to counterbalance and deter North Korea's potential nuclear threats (J. Lee, 2023). In response to a North Korean ICBM test in February 2023, an opinion article ran on the *Chosun Ilbo* criticizing the US-ROK alliance for being "slow" in responding to North Korean provocations while calling for South Korea to obtain its own nuclear program as "the time is nearing when no other option is viable" ("S.Korea Needs Own Nuclear Arms



to Deter N.Korea," 2023). Extending to the public, there have also been calls for South Korean citizens to take civil defense drills more seriously in case of an imminent North Korean ballistic missile attack ("S.Koreans Need to Take Civil Defense Drills More Seriously," 2023).

This stance — which does not represent a unified vision on South Korea's nuclear policy<sup>2</sup> — derives also from a growing awareness that a unilateral and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea has become increasingly unviable in the short to medium term. Proponents of some form of nuclear deterrent (even if conditional) for South Korea then argue that denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can only be reached if and when South Korea also obtains nuclear weapons, thereby reaching a level of nuclear parity with North Korea (J. Lee, 2023).

Another crucial aspect to consider pertains to the geopolitical landscape. Parallels have been drawn between South Korea and Ukraine, both confronting nuclear-armed neighbors relying on nuclear threats to dissuade US intervention (even though a clear distinction is that South Korea enjoys the status of a US treaty ally, something that Ukraine lacks). Despite President Yoon having recently toned down on the nuclear option, nevertheless, these analogies had already bolstered discussion within South Korea over the possible development of an autonomous defense strategy anchored in nuclear armament (Choe, 2022).

#### **4. Norms, domestic politics, and nationalism**

In addition to security-related considerations, South Korea's evolving nuclear stance can be elucidated by examining normative aspects that have insofar worked in constraining South Korea's nuclear debate, such as the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Furthermore, domestic political dynamics, including the influence of nationalism and South Korea's desire to assert

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<sup>2</sup> In the wake of the recent debate over South Korea's nuclear ambitions, Moon Chung-in, who was Special Advisor to the previous progressive President Moon Jae-in for Foreign Affairs and National Security has noted that South Korea going nuclear would not only severely impact South Korea's economy but could also motivate a nuclear arms race in East Asia (with Japan wanting to go nuclear and additional countermeasures by China and Russia). It would also mean loss of legitimacy to North Korea (akin to legitimizing North Korea's own nuclear program, resulting in an heightened risk of a nuclear war) and to the rest of South Korea's allies (Moon, 2023).

its autonomy in security matters, play — as it does in North Korea<sup>3</sup> — a parallel role in shaping this nuclear posture.

These normative elements constitute integral components of the existing global nonproliferation order, serving as effective deterrents against non-nuclear states' pursuit of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, as previously noted, their binding power has been perceived as diminishing in recent decades. The erosion of their normative influence is leading countries such as South Korea — that live under a constant military and nuclear threat from its neighbor in the North — to discuss more openly these previously taboo topics, even at the governmental level. The 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula highlights the commitment then reached by both Koreas to not “test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons” (“Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula,” 1992) which North Korea has violated since 2006 when it conducted its first nuclear test. Given what is perceived to be an ‘unfair’ state of affairs where North Korea has been actively pursuing its nuclear and ballistic program while South Korea has been abiding by the declaration, there have been calls in South Korea to rescind the deal. This is due to the perception that the deal has merely offered false illusions of a denuclearized North Korea that is continuously expanding its nuclear capabilities while holding revisionist ambitions of reunifying the peninsula (Kang, 2023).

Alongside US security guarantees, scholars and other analysis tend to look towards South Korea’s commitment to the NPT as proof that that the country would not go for the nuclear option, as the consequences of such decision would be tremendously negative for the country, both diplomatically and economically speaking (Herzog & Sukin, 2023; Kim, 2018). It would essentially make South Korea the second country to abandon the NPT (and the first democratic state), only after North Korea having done so in 2003, thereby establishing South Korea as a “international pariah” (Kim, 2018, p. 124). However, we also see some scholars contradicting this more established view (Lind & Press, 2021; Pardo, 2023), namely that the North Korean nuclear threat could offer the rationale for South Korea to argue its way out of the treaty by activating Article X. This would be seen in “a proportional response to North Korea’s actions” (Lind & Press, 2021). In fact, after the US-

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the nexus between North Korea’s nuclear ambitions and identity issues, see Durão (2020).

ROK summit, some have criticized President Yoon for effectively relinquishing the option to withdraw from the NPT, thereby foregoing South Korea's ability to develop its own nuclear weapons program, as what is needed in the Korean peninsula is "nuclear balance" (Park, 2023).

Additional calls for the possible withdrawing of South Korea from the NPT have also been growing in recent times. Cheong Seong-chang proposes a four-phase framework with the final goal of consolidating peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, and contingent upon the intensity and frequency of enduring provocations by North Korea. In the initial phase South Korea would signal its intent to withdraw, followed by a possible conditional development of its own nuclear arsenal, a course of action that could be abandoned if North Korea resumes diplomatic negotiations. The third stage would entail building the nuclear arsenal with the assistance of the US, adopting a model akin to that of Israel. The final phase involves both North and South Korea engaging in negotiations as nuclear-armed states, striving to achieve mutual denuclearization (Jung, 2023).

All these elements reflected a particular characteristic of the nuclear debate in South Korea, resulting from the division of one nation into two from the Korean War and the impact of nationalism — the search for autonomy or independence, safeguarding their own agency, and self-reliance. When South Korea first attempted to acquire the bomb, the then President Park Chung-hee emphasized how getting the bomb was paramount to national security and independence from foreign forces (including the US) and the need for the country to be "self-reliant" in defence (Kim, 2001, p. 57). While this might consist of only one additional factor that explains why some leaders search for nuclear weapons, it still holds a significant impact in a country's access and further development of its nuclear and ballistic program (Hymans, 2006). In the case of South Korea, research has shown that South Korean citizens in favor of an independent nuclear program are more likely to also hold anti-American sentiment and a nationalist mindset (Sukin, 2020).

## **5. Role of US Security Assurances**

The most frequently discussed and consequently attributed cause guiding South Korea's nuclear debate has to do with doubts over US security and defense obligations towards Seoul associated with the US-ROK alliance and the extended deterrence offered under the

nuclear umbrella<sup>4</sup>. The rationale usually goes that the US would not trade Seoul for any American city in the unfortunate event of a nuclear attack by Pyongyang, thus resulting in nuclear proponents arguing for the need of South Korea in having some form of nuclear arsenal. Thus, the nuclear debate propelled forward by President Yoon's and his consequent trip to the US could also be viewed as a means of exerting pressure to obtain more credible security guarantees from the US extended deterrence. It could also be seen as a way to remind the US that something still needs to be done about the North Korean nuclear issue, at a time when the Biden Administration is more focused not only in China, but also in Europe while aiding Ukraine's efforts in the war against Russia.

This fear of abandonment can be partially explained by the experience of US involvement in the Korean Peninsula, where the Korean War is usually labelled as the "Forgotten War" and during which several considerations were made over the possibility of a nuclear attack to end the war, if necessary, by the then Eisenhower Administration (Jackson, 2005). This view of Korea as "not important enough to further expand the war on or beyond the peninsula but too important to relinquish" has strongly influenced US policy towards the peninsula since early on, resulting in the US following contradicting policies in regard to South Korea (Work, 2023, p. 1). Even though it introduced tactical nuclear weapons during the 1960s, it contemplated the removal of military forces from South Korean territory in the 1970s, after a period in which South Korea dealt with persistent North Korean provocations and felt its national security undermined (e.g., 1968 Pueblo incident). This failed communication of strong resolve and the perceived deterioration of credibility towards the alliance in the eyes of the South Korean government at the time strongly contributed to Seoul's decision in initiating a clandestine nuclear weapons program in the 1970s (Kim, 2001).

A similar conduct can be seen more recently with the Trump Administration's approach to the North Korean issue. The decoupling from alliances and the international community felt throughout the world during Trump's administration set off alarms in Seoul and raised uncertainty among certain sectors of the South Korean political spectrum

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<sup>4</sup> Despite some differences between South Korea and Japan, namely the fact that Japan has been the sole victim of two nuclear attacks, one of the most argued reasons that Japan (another non-nuclear state and US ally) has not gone nuclear has also to do with the protection under the nuclear umbrella.

(conservatives but also moderate progressives) about the reliability of the US extended deterrence pledges to its security allies, with Korean experts cautioning that such acts (e.g. a reduction of US troops and general distrust in the alliance) could lead to South Korea once again looking for the bomb as a viable option in terms of national security (Kim, 2020, p. 4). However, it's important to take note that in the same survey that has shown that a vast majority of South Korean citizens would be in favor of the country acquiring its own independent nuclear program, 61% also answered that they trusted the US to come to the aid of South Korea in the event of a North Korean attack (Dalton et al., 2022). Then, the case might be that for some South Koreans, maintaining the security alliance is not incompatible with their country having access to some form of nuclear capabilities for military purposes as a way of protecting themselves (Kim, 2020, p. 4).

Finally, such decision to go nuclear will also depend significantly on which government is ruling in South Korea — progressives and conservatives hold different views on what role the US-ROK alliance should play when addressing North Korea. Progressives tend to call for more engagement with the North and to the improvement of inter-Korean relations; they also tend to not value the alliance (and the extended nuclear deterrence) as a viable means to get North Korea to the negotiation table or even to abandon its nuclear weapons. They tend to emphasize that some deterrence measures only contribute towards more tension and insecurity in the peninsula; on the other hand, conservatives tend to highlight North Korean military and nuclear threats to strengthen the alliance with the US and want to correct military asymmetries by obtaining additional security guarantees from US governments vis-à-vis North Korea (Kim, 2020). This shifting nuclear posture then demands from the US carefulness when addressing issues in the Korean Peninsula and when crafting policies towards it, not only in regard to the North Korea nuclear issue, but also when it comes to managing their alliance with South Korea and its security reservations. Another key factor to consider is China's role in influencing South Korea's nuclear aspirations, fueled by Beijing's desire in weaken the US-led alliance in East Asia and its preference for South Korea to be strategically autonomous from its security supplier ally.

## 6. Conclusion

When visiting the War Memorial of Korea in Seoul, one can find the following quote ingrained in one of the museums walls: "If you don't protect yourself, no one else would protect you", which reflects the inherent identity that has persisted and shaped different but also at the same time similar policies in both sides of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel since the Korean War, 70 years ago. Within this complex and divided landscape, North Korea has steadfastly pursued advancements in its nuclear and ballistic capabilities, defying international efforts aimed at denuclearization. This ongoing challenge has also reignited a robust discourse surrounding South Korea's nuclear aspirations, prompting critical questions about the feasibility and desirability of a nuclear weapons program as a deterrent to counter the ongoing threat posed by its northern neighbor.

This article has endeavored to provide a concise yet comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions within this debate. It has examined pivotal factors that influence South Korea's nuclear policy posture, including the ever-present specter of the North Korean threat, domestic considerations, the pivotal role of US security assurances, and the collective consequences of these deliberations.

The strategic choices facing South Korea in its pursuit of security in a nuclear-armed neighborhood are of profound significance, with far-reaching implications for the stability and security of East Asia. As we continue to navigate the complexities of this dynamic and evolving landscape, it is imperative that policymakers, scholars, and international stakeholders remain engaged in a thoughtful dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by South Korea's nuclear debate. It becomes increasingly important to also foster more debate on possible alternatives to denuclearization when addressing the North Korean issue and bringing the Kim regime to the negotiation table, namely in the current international environment we are experiencing, resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The role of China becomes increasingly important in this scenario in the context of North Korea's advancing nuclear capabilities and the challenges posed to US extended nuclear deterrence. Ultimately, the choices made in the coming years will shape not only the future security of the Korean Peninsula but also the broader regional stability in East Asia.

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# HOW CHINA'S ECONOMIC WOES AFFECT TAIWAN AND THE U.S.

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# How China's economic woes affect Taiwan and the U.S.

TIAGO JORGE

## Abstract

In the last couple of weeks, the People's Republic of China - a country that prides itself on rapid economic growth and stability - have seen one of the pillars of their international identity get tested, doubted and even feared. Through an analysis of Taiwan's point of view after 1949, as well as providing an interpretation on the way the United States fit into this conjecture, this article raises the possibility - aided by an overview on why the Chinese economy is failing - of another rash decision and yet another full-scale invasion in the nearest future.

**Key words:** China, Taiwan, United States, Republic of China, People's Republic of China

## 1. Introduction

If the world was a car, money would be its fuel. World leaders all over the world go through the extenuating yet necessary process of convincing their populations that every couple of years, they have the ultimate say on how they want the world to look like. Political change is deemed to be the solution for short-term problems the common people face in their day to day, and electoral procedures are seen as the machine that runs individual countries and, therefore, the whole world. However, one look at the dangerous fluctuation of the Great British Pound during Liz Truss' short lived tenure as the UK's Prime Minister will be enough to justify the timing of the decisions that followed, from the appointment and quick dismissal of Kwasi Kwarteng as the government's chief financial minister all the way until the climax: Truss' resignation. It's arguable that, in order to understand and justify political dynamics, negotiations and decisions, one should look towards the economy, not the media-infused drama or opinions derived from pseudo-experts. If we turn our attention towards the Pacific, China seems to be a point of interest where the economic landscape might tell a story much more intricate than just political.

## 2. The Chinese conundrum

Although they're a good example of a soviet-style economic model working far beyond a couple of decades, China currently faces a period of uncertainty and undeniable stagnation. Anyone in 1949 would have found it hard to believe if a time-traveler were to tell them just how rapidly the South-Pacific country would grow and become the second wealthiest world power, boasting an impressive GDP and wielding power that only their ideological allies had ever been able to muster. The present seems rougher: China's management of the COVID 19 pandemic was far from clever, the dramatically low level of domestic consumption means the country becomes hyper-dependent on investment, and the level of exports have been stagnant since the pandemic began in 2019 (Li & Li, 2023, p.4). It is important to stress, however, that developing economies always face a period of stagnation, especially when we're talking about such an unpredictable world stage where enormous risks are taken on a daily basis. After Evergrande, the property giant that reported massive losses in 2021 and has filed for bankruptcy protection in the US in recent weeks, the focus is now pointed at Country Garden, another powerful property player that is missing interest payments and putting enormous pressure on a fragile banking system. The truth is that "China has become too indebted to pump up the economy like it did 15 years ago, during the global financial crisis." (He, 2023), and that could prompt them to change their foreign policy strategy in order to become the center for the production of semiconductors - essential for the entire world. That is because "Chinese real GDP growth could slow significantly from its historic levels unless China becomes a major center for new technology and innovation and/or implements new comprehensive economic reforms." (Morrison, 2019, p.7) Such reforms could shortly be implemented, as the third plenum of the 20th party congress looms closer, but China could potentially prevent their economic woes from slipping down to pandemic levels by becoming absolutely indispensable to the rest of the globe.

## 3. The United States' positioning

Another focal point at this juncture is the role of the United States - China's main economic competitor in the world stage - in taking advantage of this turmoil with a sanction-heavy policy towards the Pacific giant. Undoubtedly, these will take a heavy toll as that's their purpose. However, sanctions like The Department of Commerce's Bureau

of Industry and Security's updates to their control of exports, which severely weaken China's ability to both produce and import high end chips, may lead to the pursuit of external avenues to bypass the impacts of these sanctions - such as using Taiwan to regain control over the manufacture of these chips. It is pertinent, additionally, to analyze the American perspective, and how the trade war with China might pan out from their economic standpoint. As per Nephew (2019), there are four aspects to consider for Washington in the midst of the strategic economic conflict: he argues China's assertiveness in economic sanctions has grown to the extent that it allows for direct retaliation against the United States, who presents vulnerabilities with China in a way it doesn't have with other contexts and countries. He also suggests that even if China doesn't surpass the US in economic terms, the parity alone would still change the relationship between the two, especially because even if the US doesn't present immediate vulnerability, their partners will, and that forces increased caution in the future.

#### **4. The Taiwanese dimension**

But perhaps the most important variable in the foreseeable future - which is severely unpredictable given China's economic situation - is the island of Taiwan (or Republic of China). Ever since General Chiang Kai-shek evacuated the central government away from the mainland, a near century-long period of knife-cutting tension characterized the Indo-Pacific, and presents itself as the main concern for the Western world order - where "peace" reigns supreme and World Wars are utopian. From 1949 to the present day, a select few truths have made sure the eventual Taiwan invasion remained a possibility: firstly, Chinese military have an overwhelming advantage in relation to the Taiwanese - assuming the war that would ensue remained between both armies and no external intervention took place - and keep investing in its upgrades more than ever (Sarkar, 2023); Taiwan are the go-to source for semiconductors, and China need that kind of importance and economic dominance; China's sphere of influence is expanding to more and more important regions, like Africa, South America and the Middle East, powered by the expansion of the BRICS. Finally, a Third World War is more unsuitable for Western powers than it has ever been, given the world economy of the present day and the political uncertainty around major powerful countries like France, the United Kingdom or even the election-bound United States of America. Does this mean China will invade Taiwan within

the next 12 months? It's still somewhat unlikely, but if there is time and circumstance, that's the timeframe we should be wary about.

## 5. China and Taiwan: A historical analysis

The relations between the two countries (China and Taiwan) have been rocky for the most part. Ever since the end of the civil war, General Chiang, who led the Chinese Nationalist Party - also known as Kuomintang - and the Republic of China from 1928 to 1949, maintained his wishes to return to the mainland, with open support from the United States, who made clear to the general "that the CIA's obligation toward the ROC should cover the whole of China and that her main missions included training for the ROC's guerrilla forces, conducting psychological operations against enemies, and intelligence gathering" (Haruka, 2018, p.5). However, two crisis periods quickly clouded the strait, given the strategic importance of the Da-achen Islands, which belonged to the ROC and were close to Chinese territory. As a result, the US offered their protection, but warned General Chiang that if the People's Liberation Army decided to invade the islands, they couldn't declare war on the PRC (People's Republic of China). The Formosa Resolution was passed, allowing President Eisenhower total authority to defend Taiwan and its off-shore islands, but Chiang ended up removing his troops from the islands. In 1955, as the US and Taiwan discussed alternative options to defend their islands, Zhou Enlai announced, in the Bandung Conference, a desire to negotiate with the United States, likely due to Soviet pressure to ease the tension. Despite talks ensuing after this shift in the PRC's policy, China resumed the bombardment of Jinmen and Mazu, vital for President Eisenhower, who viewed their loss as a possible precursor to a full-scale invasion of Taiwan. The PRC and the ROC eventually reached an agreement where both parties would shell each other in alternative days, until the PRC and the US normalized relations in the 1970s. Eventually, though, the United States recognised the PRC as the government of China and ended their previous diplomatic relationship with the ROC, pulling out of their defensive treaty and pledging to have unofficial relations to Taiwan which, according to Dollar and Bush, "is a key aspect of the current tensions." (Dollar et al., 2023, p.2).

The present day situation continues to be tense. Despite the PRC's announcement, in 1979, of "a new era of peaceful coexistence" (Curtis & King, 2023, p.6),



the election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016 and subsequent re-election in 2020 has led to a shift in policy: the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) "no longer calls for declaring formal independence, but rather states that Taiwan is already functionally independent" (Curtis & King, 2023, 6). Additionally, Tsai doesn't accept the 1992 consensus that mentions "one country, two systems" when it refers to China and Taiwan, and accepts the eventuality of war, saying Taiwanese forces "(...) have been trying very hard and making a lot of efforts to strengthen our capability," (Sudworth, 2020). Despite this, China looks to be seriously readying themselves for the full-scale invasion the world dreads, investing nearly 300 billion USD in their military. On the other end of the spectrum, Taiwan can trust in full support from the United States, strengthened by former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the island in 2022, as well as President Biden's pledge to aid Taipei were China to launch an offensive, a year earlier. Finally, the US has also been making their own moves around the PRC making use of its influence in neighboring countries like Japan, the Philippines or Vietnam and building military infrastructure, moving units all around said infrastructure. The root of the matter remains firm: China's economic woes are not likely to be a coincidence of a post-pandemic period where contraction is the norm, but of a fragile model that springs out of error-prone institutions. As Hale et al. (2023) explain, their banking system doesn't display their former strength, and real-estate - one of the primary components of their GDP, shows signs of deep crisis. Adding U.S. sanctions, a demographic crisis and the costs associated with aiding Russia in Ukraine - which motivates even further American hitback - to that paradigm, and it becomes evident the Pacific giant must defeat multiple dangers in the short to medium term. Should that conjecture persist, it becomes possible that their military directives become more aggressive and their intentions closer to materializing, forcing the U.S. and Taiwan to alter their defense strategy to deal with all-out conflict.

## 6. Conclusion

In summary, there are more reasons to believe China will fix their economic situation in the short-medium term than not: the government has levers to pull, the BRICS are due to expand and strengthen its grip on the world economy, and their influence in smaller developing countries may prove to be essential to begin an economic rebirth. However, should the downward trajectory and foreign animosity not come to a halt, China might

attempt the extreme decision to make their historical nemesis surrender to their military might.

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# STATE BUILDING & FRAGILITY MONITOR

## *Indo-Pacífico*

O STATE BUILDING & STATE FRAGILITY MONITOR APRESENTA-SE COMO UMA FERRAMENTA ÚTIL PARA ESTUDANTES, ACADÉMICOS, POLICY MAKERS, ASSIM COMO TODOS OS INTERESSADOS EM EXPLORAR AS TEMÁTICAS ABORDADAS.