



CIPS WORKING PAPER

The Indo-Pacific and Canada's Entanglements across the Taiwan Strait

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Table of Contents

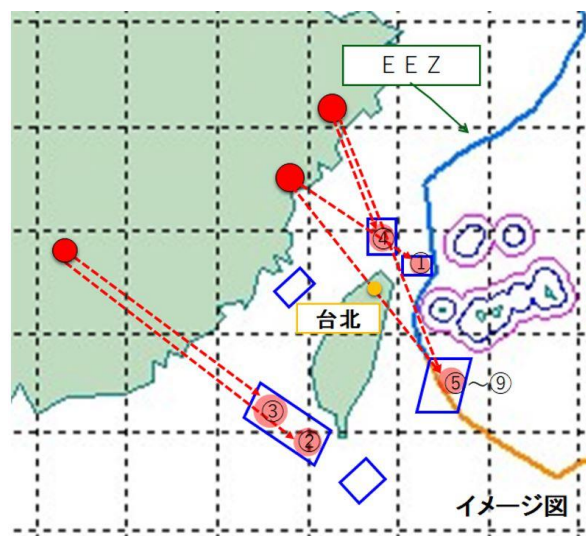
Executive Summary.....	3
An Ecological Approach to Indo-Pacific Conflicts: The Treaty History	4
Today's Predicament: Schismogenesis	7
Canada's Protocol with the PRC	8
Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Taiwan.....	9
Conclusion	11
The Author.....	13
References	14

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) broadens Canada's commitment to a broad coalition of democracies that Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō first proposed to the Parliament of India 15 years previously. In that speech entitled "Confluence of the Two Seas," Abe began with a quote from Indian spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda: "Different streams, having their sources in different places, all mingle their water in the sea" (Abe 2007). Although Abe also discussed economics and security, he described the Indo-Pacific as an ecology, shaped by trees and water, and for which human societies have collective responsibility. Ecological thinking, which Abe framed as a cultural affinity between India and Japan, is useful for understanding the Indo-Pacific and all partners who are linked by the waters of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is important to begin all reflection of the Indo-Pacific with an understanding that it is a maritime region that nourishes human and non-human lives, all of whom would be negatively impacted by military conflict.

Formosa, a verdant island of forested mountains in the azure waters near Okinawa, lies near the geographical centre of the Indo-Pacific. Now known as Taiwan, a society of 23.5 million people, it is the lynchpin of regional security and thus central to consideration in defence and foreign policy. The main challenge is that China has a firm goal to annex Taiwan, with the assumption that controlling the first island chain is necessary for them to gain unfettered access to the Pacific Ocean (Yoshihara 2012). China has made it clear in decades of laws and public pronouncements that they are unwilling to renounce the use of military force to take Taiwan. In August 2022, China conducted military exercises around Taiwan, even firing missiles over Taiwan and into the waters of Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (figure 1). This is not just a conflict between states. The lower box in the figure roughly covers the fishing grounds of the Indigenous Tao (Yami) people of Orchid Island. An ecological perspective means that one has to consider, not just geopolitical competition between states, but the impact of state actions on Indigenous peoples and all other lives.

Figure One: Map of China's military exercises around Taiwan, August 2022



Source: <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/news/2022/08/04d.html>

China's military exercises in the air and waters around Taiwan, conducted just six months after China and Russia forged a "no limits" partnership and Russia invaded Ukraine, sent a stark message to the world that military threats made by authoritarian regimes must be taken seriously. Canada's IPS is a part of the international reaction to these threats. A conflict in the Indo-Pacific would destroy lives, while draining resources needed to deal with existential issues of global warming and biodiversity loss. How can the world move from the threat of war to collaboration on these more urgent issues? How can Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy contribute to that goal? To seek answers to those questions, we need to understand China's threats in the region and Canada's response in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, first in terms of human interaction and eventually in terms of human entanglements with other forms of life. Those exercises disturb the lives of many, including the Indigenous Tao (Yami) people of Orchid Island, whose boats are depicted in Figure Two.

Figure Two: Modern and Traditional Tao Boats at Orchid Island's Harbour



Source: Scott Simon, Orchid Island, 2019

AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO INDO-PACIFIC CONFLICTS: THE TREATY HISTORY

A relevant approach in the interdisciplinary study of international relations is what ecological anthropologist Gregory Bateson called cybernetics. Bateson identified the 1919 Treaty of Versailles as a turning point in human history, defined as points when attitudes about patterns of relationship changed. Bateson pinpointed the Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I, because German resentment and demoralization caused by the harsh treaty terms after having been promised a soft armistice eventually led to World War II (Bateson 1987 [1972]: 477-478).

Bateson ignored Chinese reactions to the Treaty of Versailles. China, which hoped the Treaty would welcome them into the community of nations as a full equal

partner, instead saw German colonies – including the Shandong Peninsula – transferred to Japan. As a result, a disillusioned China refused to sign the treaty and turned away from the West and its model of liberal democracy. The Versailles Treaty sparked China's May Fourth Movement, set China on a path to Bolshevik revolution, and still informs China's perceptions of the international system in the Xi Jinping era (Foot 2019). The 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty (SFPT), which ended WWII with Japan, likewise failed to reset China's relations with the West because China was not invited to treaty negotiations. Since then, China has consistently repudiated the SFPT and its historical implications for the sovereignty of Taiwan, including in its most recent White Paper on the subject (China 2022). The USSR, which did not sign the final treaty because it wanted China to be included, denounced the final draft as "not a treaty of peace but a treaty for preparation of a new war in the Far East" (Hara 2007: 5). That was an ominous warning.

The cybernetic approach considers that all evolving systems, including the international inter-state system, are homeostatic systems connected to one another. To understand the people-to-people relations that were altered by the Treaty of Versailles, Bateson used the ecological metaphor of a house thermostat. When the weather outdoors changes, the temperature falls, and the thermometer turns on the furnace. When the room warms up, the thermometer turns off the furnace. The whole system is called a homeostatic circuit. Bateson points out that, in addition to the weather and the furnace, there is also a human who can adjust the settings to make the system oscillate around a new level, which is called the "bias" of the system. When humans change the bias of the system, they change the "attitude" of the system (Bateson 1987 [1972]: 476). For Bateson, the Treaty of Versailles was the paradigmatic example of a change in attitude of the system. It was a major change in the global inter-state system because it led to German aggression in WWII and, I would add, to the Chinese Communist Revolution. The Treaty of Versailles set the attitude of the system so that China remains defiant of the West and international rule-of-law to this day. When a treaty is signed, the individuals affected do not change immediately, but the groups involved develop special patterns of behaviour that they use in contacts with each other (Bateson 1987 [1972]: 103).

The entire SFPT process frustrated China immensely. From the perspective of the SFPT drafters, the Chinese Revolution created a major dilemma. The People's Republic of China (PRC) had been established in 1949, and some states argued that the PRC should be included in negotiations. Yet, the forces of the Republic of China (ROC) had already fled to Formosa and still vowed to retake China. The ROC remained a member of the United Nations, most importantly with full support from the United States. When US-UK negotiations about the Treaty came to a deadlock because they disagreed on the status of China, they decided to move ahead with the treaty based on a tri-partite compromise: 1) neither government claiming China would participate in the peace conference, 2) Japan would choose its own future relationship with China, and 3) Formosa's fate would not be determined by the treaty (Hara 2007: 65). Although the ROC was excluded, it was consulted behind the scenes by the US, which protected their interests. The question of which government represents China and what should be the fate of Formosa were two distinct issues, but closely intertwined because the ROC was already present on the island. There was an uprising against ROC rule in 1947, and widespread discontent against the new government was developing into Formosan

nationalism (Mendel 1970), but the island was under martial law and its inhabitants had no say in the matter. In Ottawa, there was a shared hope across the political spectrum that the Formosan people would eventually choose their own form of government (Simon 2022: 10).

In this delicate context, Article 2 (b) of the SFPT simply declared: “Japan renounces all right, title and claim to Formosa and the Pescadores” (Hara 2007: 66). On April 28, 1952, not coincidentally the same day that the US ratified the SFPT, Japan and the ROC signed a separate peace treaty in which they established diplomatic relations, made provisions for disposition of property, and deemed all inhabitants of Taiwan and the Pescadores to be nationals of the ROC. The SFPT thus excluded China from the most important post-war negotiations in the Indo-Pacific and placed Taiwan outside of PRC jurisdiction. The twin peace treaties provided a degree of ontological security to ROC leaders on Taiwan, yet frustrated Taiwanese nationalists. Moreover, there were Indigenous populations (speakers of Austronesian languages) who experienced the ROC as just another wave of colonialism (Chiu 2000). To leaders in Beijing, it was another unfair international treaty that needed to be repudiated. It fundamentally changed the bias (or “attitude”) of the Indo-Pacific.

From the perspective of Japan and the West, the SFPT is the foundation of international rule-of-law in the Indo-Pacific. A cybernetics approach anticipates that China would be demoralized from its treatment at the beginning of this relationship, and thus seek to improve its relative position within it. Just a decade after the SFPT, sociologist Raymond Aron classified Formosa, along with Japan and the Philippines, as prosperous island states (Aron 1984 [1962]: 671). He thought, however, that the regime in Peking had specific grievances in the islands of Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu, which housed hostile forces directed by the survivors of the previous regime and backed up by a foreign power. He saw this as intolerable for any great power, and wondered if an eventual nuclear China would continue to passively accept this situation (Aron 1984 [1962]: 690). Aron was wrong to think that Chinese grievances could be limited to those islands immediately off the coast of Fujian. The continuing existence of an alternative China on Taiwan (the ROC), a beacon of democracy for the Chinese people, remains a “core issue” for Chinese leaders who seem eager to expand their presence and influence in the region. China’s patterns of behaviour in international relations are grounded in perceptions of unfair treatment in treaties that include, but are not limited to the Treaty of Shimonoseki (that gave Taiwan to Japan in 1895), the Treaty of Versailles and the SFPT. China denies this treaty history, even explicitly in the 2022 White Paper on Taiwan. China ceaselessly reminds the world of their position.

China’s official communications are signs of patterned behaviour in international relations. When asked about a possible transit visit of Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen to the United States, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, declared that “Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People’s Republic of China” (China 2023a). Furthermore, “The Taiwan question is the core of the core interests of China, the bedrock of the political foundation of China-US relations, and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations” (China 2023a). After the August 2022 military straits that followed the visit of US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan, Tsai may have hoped to lower tensions by meeting the new House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in the United States rather than in Taiwan. China thus does not relate to Taiwan as a

neighbouring country, but rather as an issue in China-US relations threatened by “separatist forces for Taiwan independence” (China 2023a). Another communication, only two weeks earlier, accused the US of dominating other countries with five forms of hegemony, including the “selective use of international law and rules” (China 2023b). This is another denial of the SFPT system. China’s framing of the US as a dangerous hegemon and Taiwan as separatists should be taken seriously in a cybernetic approach. China claims that the US interferes in other countries’ affairs, while denying that Tsai is even the elected president of a country. These are all relations between human actors.

TODAY’S PREDICAMENT: SCHISMOGENESIS

As predicted by Bateson, Chinese leaders and diplomats developed special patterns of behaviour in interactions. This included a pattern of China insisting that Taiwan is an integral part of China; and that China needs to annex Taiwan to take its rightful place in the world. These notions are mutually contradictory; if Taiwan were an integral part of China, there would be neither a need for China to claim it so vociferously nor to annex it. China’s constant claims, and the necessary reactions to it from Taiwan and other states, is patterned behaviour, a symmetrical differentiation in human interaction. This can lead to schismogenesis (literally, “creation of division”), hostility and a breakdown in the system (Bateson 1987 [1972]: 78).

China’s test of its first nuclear bomb in Xinjiang on October 16, 1964 was a game changer. The emergence of China as a nuclear power radically altered the bias of the post-war system. China – which had already started the Korean War, invaded Tibet, suppressed the Uyghurs of Eastern Turkestan, and attacked India – was a clear threat and needed to be incorporated into the world system as a peaceful member. This is the base point from which Canada and other states established relations with China. In international rivalries, schismogenesis was delayed by incorporating China into a system of dynamic equilibrium that could compensate for or balance against any hostile behaviour. China got massive foreign direct investment from Taiwan and other economies for industrialization and access to global markets for its manufactured products, in exchange for not challenging the SFPT system. Those strategies of engagement prevented the outbreak of war for decades, but are now strained, as China invests the gains from economic development into the most rapid military modernization in human history.

In the absence of a peace treaty between the two sides, the Communists (PRC) and the Nationalists (ROC) remain technically in a state of civil war. From the PRC’s perspective, it is difficult to accept the fact that their long-standing nemesis, backed up by the United States and its allies, is still a functioning state with global reach even in the absence of formal diplomatic relations with most countries and United Nations membership. China’s goal is to extinguish the ROC, and to annex Taiwan. They hope to do so through cross-strait negotiation, if a willing partner is ever elected to government in Taiwan, but they have never renounced the possibility of taking military action if necessary. At the international diplomatic level, China seeks to transform the cross-strait situation into a purely domestic affair through exclusion of Taiwan from any international role and diplomatic coercion of third states. China does not accept the fundamental principle of the SFPT system that the eventual resolution of Taiwan’s

status is an international issue. They have never renounced the possibility of taking military action if necessary, and in 2022 unilaterally escalated their threats. This is intrinsically a dangerous threat to the status quo. Each state, including Canada, can only deal with this in the context of existing relations with China.

CANADA'S PROTOCOL WITH THE PRC

Canada's diplomatic relations with the PRC began with the *Joint Communiqué of the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Canada Concerning the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between China and Canada* signed in Stockholm on October 10, 1970. During negotiations, China arrived with "three constant principles": 1) recognizing that the PRC is the sole legal government of China; 2) recognizing that Taiwan is an unalienable part of China, thus severing all relations with the "Chiang Kai-shek gang"; and 3) supporting the entry of the PRC into the United Nations, with no place to be preserved for the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek. Canada was equally determined to "not accept any commitment that precluded Canadian recognition of an independent state of Taiwan were this at all feasible" (Edmonds 1998: 207). The final document was a compromise in which the two sides agreed to disagree on China's second principle. China claimed Taiwan to be an inalienable part of its territory, and Canada "takes note of this position of the Chinese government." Mitchell Sharp, Secretary of State for External Affairs at the time, made it clear to Chinese negotiators that his interpretation of "takes note" to be delivered to Parliament as "neither challenge nor endorse" was an integral and important part of the formula (Edmonds 1998: 212). China has ever since never ceased its attempts to impose a "One China principle," defining Taiwan as part of China, on Canada.

Canada remains firm on its position. On February 14, 2022, Weldon Epp, Director General of North Asia at Global Affairs Canada summarized Canada's policy to Parliament: "Under this policy, Canada recognizes the People's Republic of China, or PRC, as the only legitimate government of China, while noting the Chinese government's position on Taiwan, but not endorsing or challenging it" (Canada 2022a). Canada's decision to not endorse China's position on Taiwan is prudent because it is counterfactual and could commit Canada to future action. Canada's choice to not challenge China was necessary in 1970 to obtain diplomatic relations with China, but remains conditional on China's peaceful behaviour. Pragmatic arrangements of this kind, temporarily shelving intractable disagreements, have made it possible to have relations with China, while upholding the SFPT system and enabling Taiwan to interact independently of China in its relations with other states. Canada's reassurances to China that Canada will not challenge its claims to Taiwan, with full knowledge that these claims are spurious and contradict the facts on the ground, constitute a communication strategy designed to lower the geopolitical heat in the region.

These arrangements linked Taiwan to the United States, Japan, and Western countries in ways that fundamentally altered the character of its society. Since 1970, Taiwan has democratized and embraced progressive values on such issues as same-sex marriage and Indigenous reconciliation. Now Canada's 13th largest trading partner and the 5th largest in Asia, Taiwan plays an important role in high-value supply chains, most notably in semiconductors. China, however, has modernized its military and is

increasing military pressure on Taiwan. This is the context in which democratic states are drafting Indo-Pacific strategies. To extend Bateson's metaphor, these Indo-Pacific policies are attempts to cool tensions in the region. Schismogenesis is already evident, especially since the recent Sino-Russian pact, so the goal of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific is now to prevent hostility. The various Indo-Pacific strategies reveal the contours of human interaction in the region. As I will show below, the IPSs, including Canada's, are often framed in a way that is intended to reassure China's leaders. While remaining firm that the world will not accept unilateral aggression, and even showing a will to deter aggression through actions such as Taiwan Strait transits, none of them openly challenge China's claims to Taiwan.

CANADA'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY AND TAIWAN

In a cybernetic approach, one looks for signals that convey information. Canada sent a signal in the IPS by explicitly naming Taiwan eight times. This gives Taiwan greater prominence than Mongolia, which is not mentioned at all, in spite of Canadian mining interests there; but even Australia and New Zealand merit five mentions each. This document is intended to send signals, not only to other states, but to Canadian citizens. The IPS reflects the consensus of the Government of Canada. Canada's leaders know that a large majority of Canadians share a broad distrust of China, and that such views are unlikely to dissipate soon (Paris 2020). These views are widely held in many countries (Silver, Huang and Clancy 2022). Canada shares a common preoccupation with the United States, Japan, and other states about China's problematic behaviours, including but not limited to in the Taiwan Strait. By labelling China in the IPS as "an increasingly disruptive global power" (Canada 2022b: 7), Canada seeks to place limits on China's problematic behaviours and should be expected to uphold those limits. The IPS thus sends signals to Canadians, to China and Taiwan, as well as to allied states that Canada has its own red lines.

First of all, the IPS signals a commitment to uphold Canada's One China Policy, which is fundamentally different from China's One China Principle. China should be reassured by the fact that Taiwan is discussed in the section on the PRC, rather than in the section on the North Pacific (where it would be if supply chains were the predominant consideration). It specifically promises that multifaceted engagement with Taiwan will remain consistent "with our One China Policy." The IPS thus does *not challenge* PRC claims to Taiwan. After a general introduction on the region and a section on economic opportunities, there is a section on strategic challenges. It mentions escalating tensions across the Taiwan Strait, before detailing that China is assertive in advancing unilateral claims, and in "increasingly coercive treatment of other countries and economies." It reminds China clearly that "Respect for the sovereignty of other states is a cornerstone of the rules-based international order and of government's ability to work together to solve shared problems" (Canada 2022: 3). Avoiding a direct challenge to the PRC, the IPS calls out the threats in diplomatic parlance, calling out China's "coercive treatment of other countries and economies" to distinguish between countries (Japan, India) and economies (Taiwan). Yet, the IPS shows concern with China's threats to Taiwan, which it would not do if Canada considered the issue to be strictly domestic. Thus, it does *not endorse* China's claims to Taiwan.

The choice of the word “Taiwan” in the IPS, as opposed to “Chinese Taipei” as used at APEC and in the Indigenous Peoples Economic and Trade Cooperation Arrangement (IPETCA) highlighted in the IPS, demonstrates that Canada does not endorse China’s claims. This kind of information, which triggers new pathways, is what Bateson calls a “difference which makes a difference” (Bateson 1987 [1972]: 460). Consistent with its goal to not endorse China’s claim to Taiwan, Canada is pushing back against efforts to deny the existence of Taiwan in the world, but Canada is selective in where and how it does so.

Second, the IPS gives priority to economic relations. This can be seen in the fact that the section on economic opportunities precedes the one on strategic challenges. Canada often refers to Taiwan as an economy, and it is on this basis that Canada and Taiwan engage as equals in international organizations (the WTO and APEC) where Taiwan is accepted as a full member. The IPS calls for strengthening science, technology and innovation partnerships with Taiwan and four other countries as part of supply chain resilience (Canada 2022b: 18). The exclusion of China from this list is noteworthy. The word “friendshoring,” brought into Canadian discourse by Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland (Freeland 2022), does not figure in the document, but the intention to consciously build supply chains through targeted economic interaction is signalled in a way that supports Taiwan. Economic relations are all about human livelihoods, whether those of engineers designing semiconductors or people raising clams in the Taiwan Strait (figure 3).

Figure 3: A man harvests oysters in the Taiwan Strait. These lives would be destroyed by conflict.



Source: Scott Simon, Tainan, 2020

Thirdly, two out of the eight explicit mentions of Taiwan call for closer relations between Indigenous peoples. It promises implementation of IPETCA in cooperation with the existing partners of Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan (Canada 2022b: 17). It

also calls for enhanced Indigenous exchanges with regional partners in other areas, as part of the “path of reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples.” Moreover, it supports the implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the Indo-Pacific.” This sends signals to at least two parties. To a Canadian audience, it signals the government’s commitment to Indigenous reconciliation and, along with the infographic on the first page of the IPS showing that the Indo-Pacific is home to 67% of the world’s Indigenous peoples, asserts an indigenized identity for Canada.

Fourthly, the IPS signals increased convergence with US policy. The promise, in the section on China, to work with partners to “push back against *any* unilateral actions that threaten the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, as well as the East and South China Seas” (emphasis added) is more consistent with American protocol than has been the case in the past. Canada’s IPS is similar to the US position that: “We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side; we do not support Taiwan independence; and we expect cross-strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means” (Blinken 2022).

The most important convergence between Canadian and US policy is the notion of resilience, which is increasingly used in diplomatic parlance (Bourbeau 2015). The IPS uses the term 21 times and in the titles of two strategic objectives, demonstrating that the drafters see it as a fundamental security concept. Canada promises to grow “economic and people-to-people ties with Taiwan while supporting *its resilience*” (Canada 2022b: 22). On December 8, Congress passed a bipartisan amendment to its annual defence legislation, called the Taiwan Enhanced Resiliency Act (TERA). The framing of China’s aggression toward Taiwan as a shared security threat and the goal of supporting Taiwan’s resilience surely emerged from discussions between Canada and the United States in the months preceding both the IPS and TERA. The IPS thus signals an alignment with the United States in the region. With Canada’s new commitments to defence, one can expect more frequent sailings of Canadian Navy frigates in the Taiwan Strait and cooperation with the United States.

CONCLUSION

Canada’s IPS is a long-awaited foreign policy document and an explicit commitment to Canada’s place in the Indo-Pacific. Taiwan is an important component of the strategy, and is the lynchpin of security in the Indo-Pacific. A close reading of the IPS suggests that its drafters intended to signal Canada’s commitment to its own One China Policy, which means that it neither challenges nor endorses China’s claims to Taiwan. This delicate balancing act has permitted Canada to pursue broad-based relationships with both China and Taiwan for decades. Canada promises Taiwan enhanced economic and people-to-people ties, and those are always the most important relations between two countries. The vocabulary of the document also signals an alignment with Canada’s democratic allies in the United States, Japan, and across the region. Taiwan is also an important partner as Canada promotes liberal values including Indigenous and LGBT+ rights. In terms of Taiwan, the IPS does not announce any major change, but its vocabulary suggests a closer alignment with the United States than in the past.

Cybernetic theory proposes that the states involved in the same system will respond in ways consistent with long-standing learned patterns of interaction. Considering its long-standing attitude of hostility toward the SFPT system, it is not surprising that China issued a formal diplomatic *démarche* about the IPS when Chinese Ambassador to Canada, Cong Peiwu, pushed back against the IPS in a speech at the University of Ottawa on December 2 (Cong 2022; see also Global Times 2022a). The Embassy spokesperson said that “China won’t tolerate any external interference on matters related to Taiwan island” (Global Times 2022b). China framed the IPS within its narrative of China-US competition. Canada signalled consistency in its One China Policy, especially the commitment to neither endorse nor challenge China’s claims, while China reacted in expected ways.

The main changes are real kinetic changes in the Taiwan Strait security situation. In August 2022, China launched its most comprehensive military exercise around Taiwan in its history, showing its resolve to annex the island and repel international involvement. ROC Ministry of Defence statistics show that the PLA forces have violated Taiwan’s Air Defence Identification Zone an unprecedented 2988 times to date in 2022 (Brown 2022). Already in 2020, China denied the existence of the Taiwan Strait median line, which traditionally both sides respected (Cole 2020). China’s hostility toward Taiwan makes China the only player that has contributed to rising tensions. Taiwan has noticed and extended the length of obligatory military service, while purchasing more arms from the United States.

The increasing number of Indo-Pacific strategy documents, to which Canada is only the most recent contributor, indicates a strategic alignment to promote peace and security across the region. The intent is to signal to China that the military action against Taiwan will face strong international reactions. In the words of Canada’s Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, echoing similar US and EU policy statements, “We will challenge China when we ought to, and we will co-operate with China when we must” (Joly 2022). Indo-Pacific strategies, and cooperation to deter Chinese aggression, are all attempts to lower the geopolitical temperature and maintain homeostasis. Now that China is rapidly obtaining the military strength to enforce its goals, these various strategies are ways of managing relations with China, while trying to continue engagement with Taiwan. The cybernetics approach reminds us that we are dealing with human relations. The goal in regard to the difficult Chinese partners in the relationship is to reassure them that their needs are respected without appeasement, and to deter aggression without provoking it. China is unlikely to ever renounce its claims to Taiwan, but reducing geopolitical attentions can permit China and other countries to focus on what are really more urgent issues.

Joly specifically named biodiversity loss as one of the areas in which the world must collaborate, and just a month before Canada and China co-hosted the UN Conference for Biodiversity in Montréal. Canada would surely be very pleased to see China and Taiwan set aside their differences, to instead collaborate on habitat and species resilience in the Taiwan Strait, which hosts many endangered migratory birds like the Black-faced Spoonbill (figure 4). These are lives that would be disrupted by a conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Attention to their shared ecology highlights the threat of conflict, no matter who “wins.”

Figure 4: an endangered Black-faced Spoonbill in a wetland near the Taiwan Strait



Source: Scott Simon, Tainan, 2018

Ecological notions, including both cybernetic theory and the metaphor of resilience, encourage us to find the links between international relations and biodiversity. By making this link, in the IPS and in concrete initiatives in collaboration with China, Canada is signalling to China that we would like to maintain peace and cooperate on issues of far greater urgency. This is the kind of homeostasis, a creative balancing act that is needed to repair schismogenesis, while preventing hostility and a breakdown in the system that endangers both human and non-human lives.

THE AUTHOR

Scott Simon (Ph.D., McGill University, 1998), is a socio-anthropologist trained in both disciplines (anthropology and sociology). He is Professor and Assistant Director of the School of Sociological and Anthropological Studies at the University of Ottawa, as well as researcher with the Human Rights Research and Education Centre and the Centre for International Policy Studies. Co-holder of the Chair of Taiwan Studies at the University of Ottawa, he has lived in Taiwan for ten years and returned annually for field research until the COVID-19 pandemic. He has also done field research in Japan and Guam. His research interests include Indigenous rights, development, political anthropology, and Taiwan's international status. He has written four books and numerous articles about Taiwan. He has also published various policy papers about Taiwan for Canadian and international think tanks. This year, he will return to Taiwan to finish his SSHRC-funded research on "Austronesian Worlds: Human-Animal Entanglements in the Pacific Anthropocene." He is developing an anthropological approach to international relations.

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