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## **The National Guard Bureau State Partnership Program and Taiwan**

Security cooperation with partners and allies in the Western Pacific is paramount to successfully contending with great power competition and the Communist Party of China's desire to upend the current world order. President Biden called for the United States to "double down on building partnerships throughout the world, because our strength is multiplied when we combine efforts to address common challenges, share costs, and widen the circle of cooperation" in his 2021 interim national security strategic guidance.<sup>1</sup> In concert with that guidance, "strengthening allies and partners" is one of four critical areas identified by the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) to promote a "free and open Indo-Pacific."<sup>2</sup> A proven method of military-to-military cooperation is the National Guard Bureau's state partnership program (SPP), which has also nurtured military-to-civilian and civilian-to-civilian collaboration. SPP is a "two-way street where both parties win."<sup>3</sup>

The Department of Defense should establish a state partnership between Taiwan and the National Guard of the United States in collaboration with the Department of State to encourage stability in the western Pacific region and deter aggression from the People's Republic of China. First, a partnership would foster interoperability between the active and reserve forces of Taiwan, the U.S., and others in the region. Second, it would broaden both partners' professional and technical capabilities. Finally, and arguably most importantly, a state partnership would develop enduring personal relationships.

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<sup>1</sup> "Interim National Security Strategic Guidance," White House Press Releases, Fact Sheets and Briefings / FIND (Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, LLC, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> "Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Transcript," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, March 11, 2022, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/2964526/senate-armed-services-committee-sasc-transcript/>.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Greenhill and Zack Sheely, "Hokanson: State Partnership Program Critical to National Security," National Guard, April 12, 2022, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/2996588/hokanson-state-partnership-program-critical-to-national-security/>.

## NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Joint doctrine recognizes that activities conducted in the cooperation segment of the competition continuum are vital to achieving national objectives because of their impact on the rest of the spectrum. Joint Publication (J.P.) 3-0 states that “through cooperation, [the department of defense] supports [U.S. Government] strategic objectives by developing security relationships, building allied and partner capacity and capability, enabling them to operate alongside U.S. forces around the globe, and securing access in, over, and through allied and partner nations.”<sup>4</sup> The state partnership program (SPP) is an essential tool used by the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Defense (DOD) to develop security partnerships with nations worldwide.

SPP is a mutually beneficial framework for sustained cooperation between the military of a foreign country and a state national guard managed by the National Guard Bureau (NGB) and implemented by the state’s adjutant general.<sup>5</sup> The program was instituted in 1993 after the fall of the Soviet Union to aid former Soviet states in developing civilian-led reserve forces in a manner intended to be less intimidating to Russia than supporting the Baltic countries with U.S. active-duty forces. The first three partnerships were Estonia-Maryland, Latvia-Michigan, and Lithuania-Pennsylvania.<sup>6</sup> There are currently 93 countries participating in 85 partnerships around the world with some smaller countries grouped into one partnership (i.e., Nevada’s partnership with Fiji and Tonga).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication (J.P.) 3-0 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 18 June 2022), I-4.

<sup>5</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>6</sup> Joseph L. Lengyel, “Securing the Nation One Partnership at a Time,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 12, 12, no. 3 (2018): 5, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Portals/31/Documents/J-5/InternationalAffairs/StatePartnershipProgram/Securing-the-Nation-One-Partnership-at-a-Time.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> “State Partnership Program,” The National Guard - Official Website of the National Guard, accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/J-5/International-Affairs-Division/State-Partnership-Program/>.

J.P. 3-0 champions “the benefits of pursuing mutual interests alongside allies and partners” as being “powerful and priceless.”<sup>8</sup> SPP leverages mutual interests when selecting the state national guard involved in a new partnership. NGB seeks commonality with a state national guard and its foreign partner in areas like economics, demographics, or military size and composition.<sup>9</sup> These shared backgrounds further the likelihood of advantages to both partners through participation in the program. Successful NGB partnerships “support combatant commander and chief of mission security cooperation objectives and DOD policy goals.”<sup>10</sup>

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Daniel Hokanson, anticipates SPP to grow by two partnerships annually for the next 15 years.<sup>11</sup> Major General Reginald Neal, the U.S. Army Pacific deputy commander, recently acknowledged the possibility of growth opportunities for new partnerships in USINDOPACOM.<sup>12</sup> One of these new partnerships should be with Taiwan.

## INTEROPERABILITY

Interoperability is a matter of strategic importance. The 2018 National Military Strategy directed that “building a strong, agile, and resilient force requires better interoperability and enhancing the combat lethality and survivability of our allies and partners.”<sup>13</sup> The Joint Strategic Planning System also addresses interoperability acknowledging that it is of prime importance “to identify efficiencies and synergies, and to champion integration with allies,

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<sup>8</sup> CJCS, *Joint Operations*, J.P. 3-0, I-2.

<sup>9</sup> Lengyel, “Securing the Nation,” 5-6.

<sup>10</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>11</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>12</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>13</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Description of the National Military Strategy 2018,” July 12, 2019, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/UNCLASS\\_2018\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy\\_Description.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/UNCLASS_2018_National_Military_Strategy_Description.pdf), 3-4.

partners, and the interagency at the national-strategic level.”<sup>14</sup> Interoperability allows units to operate in an integrated manner, which is far more effective than working in parallel when called upon in wartime or peacetime.

A state partnership between Taiwan and a state national guard would foster interoperability of friendly military forces in the western Pacific. USINDOPACOM recognizes the need for interoperability with all friendly nations within its theater including Taiwan. Then-commander, Adm Philip Davidson, stated that USINDOPACOM “focuses on improving the Taiwan military's joint interoperability, training, readiness, and professional development” in a March 2021 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee.<sup>15</sup> Greater interoperability between the militaries of Taiwan, the United States, and other Indo-Pacific nations would deter Chinese aggression in the western Pacific.

Recurring exercises and other training events between members of a state national guard and the Taiwan military would provide a familiarization with each other’s tactics and procedures. They offer an “opportunity to work together to understand tactically, how you work together.”<sup>16</sup> Exercises also offer the opportunity to literally understand each other. This was the case during a recent training with the Washington National Guard and the Malaysian Army. Lt. Col. Mohd Faizor, a staff officer for Headquarters, 4th Malaysian Infantry Division expressed the following: “We had to work out our dialect of speaking, especially in the English language. So initially we had a problem of how to communicate. But after day two we had no more problems.”<sup>17</sup> As a

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<sup>14</sup> U.S. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Strategic Planning System*, CJCSI 3100.01E (Washington, DC: CJCS, 21 May 2021), A-1.

<sup>15</sup> “Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Transcript,” U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, March 11, 2022, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/2964526/senate-armed-services-committee-sasc-transcript/>.

<sup>16</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”.

<sup>17</sup> Jason Kreiss, “Washington National Guard Strengthens Bond with Malaysia,” National Guard, March 20, 2019, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/State-Partnership-Program/Article/1790456/washington-national-guard-strengthens-bond-with-malaysia/>.

result of a state partnership, the members of the U.S. and Taiwan militaries would perform more efficiently and effectively when called upon to work together due to an understanding and familiarity with each other.

The partnership would also provide an opportunity to improve interoperability between the Taiwan Ministry of National Defense active-duty forces and the reserve forces of the Taiwan Armed Forces Reserve Command – All-out Defense Mobilization Agency. The growing concern of an invasion by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and lack of professionalism and credibility led to a reorganization of Taiwan’s reserve forces in January 2022. The change was instituted to create a “more reliable backup for regular soldiers in defending the nation.”<sup>18</sup> Training frequency was also updated in addition to organizational changes. Before this year, Taiwanese reserve forces were required to train at least five days every other year; they are now required to train two weeks every year.<sup>19</sup> Joint exercises through an SPP with the national guard could intentionally involve regular and reserve Taiwanese forces to provide more opportunities for those forces to collaborate. Additionally, Taiwanese military leaders could garner lessons learned from Guard leadership regarding interoperability between U.S. active and reserve forces, which could be used to strengthen Taiwan’s total force.

Furthermore, a state partnership would encourage interoperability between the Taiwanese military and other militaries in the Western Pacific. 950 SPP activities were completed in 2018. One hundred fifty-eight were with partners in INDOPACOM and included 1,296 National Guard members and 2,558 foreign participants.<sup>20</sup> There are currently 12 active partnerships in

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<sup>18</sup> 台北時報 “New Agency to Oversee Mobilization of Reserves,” Taipei Times (台北時報, April 20, 2021), <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2021/04/21/2003756078>.

<sup>19</sup> 台北時報 “New Agency”.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The State Partnership Program: FY2018 Annual Report to Congress*, 15 February 2019, 64-76.

USINDOPACOM with 14 countries. Table 1 provides a list of countries with their state partner and the year the partnership was established.<sup>22</sup>

Greater interoperability with any of those countries is not a guaranteed outcome of a state partnership between Taiwan and a state national guard, but it is likely as the national guard would be a common partner.

A more assured way of furthering

interoperability would be for NGB to select one of the state’s already partnering with an Indo-Pacific nation to partner with Taiwan. This arrangement would be similar to Washington State’s partnerships with Malaysia and Thailand through which NGB leadership hopes to “pursue trilateral exercises in the mutual interest area between US-Malaysia-Thailand in future years leaning toward the Indo-Pacific Command’s multilateral engagement focus.”<sup>23</sup> A partnership between one of the states listed in Table 1 and Taiwan would generate a profound opportunity to increase interoperability between Taiwan and its neighbors.

<b>Partner Nation</b>	<b>State National Guard</b>	<b>Year Est.</b>
Bangladesh	Oregon	2008
Indonesia	Hawaii	2006
Malaysia	Washington	2017
Mongolia	Alaska	2003
Nepal	Utah	2019
Papua New Guinea	Wisconsin	2020
Philippines	Guam/Hawaii	2000
Sri Lanka/ Maldives	Montana	2020/21
Thailand	Washington	2002
Timor-Leste	Rhode Island	2020
Tonga / Fiji	Nevada	2014/18
Vietnam	Oregon	2012

**Table 1. INDOPACOM State Partnerships<sup>21</sup>**

<sup>21</sup> “State Partnership Program,” The National Guard - Official Website of the National Guard, accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/J-5/International-Affairs-Division/State-Partnership-Program/>.

<sup>22</sup> “State Partnership Program,” The National Guard.

<sup>23</sup> Charity Borg and Anh Pham, “Washington State and Malaysia’s New State Partnership Program Enters Third Year,” Asia Matters for America, April 17, 2020, <https://asiamattersforamerica.org/articles/washington-state-and-malysias-new-state-partnership-program-enters-third-year>.

## PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES

In addition to improved interoperability, participating members' professional and technical abilities would be broadened by joint training and exercises undertaken as part of the state partnership. SPP engagements have included training opportunities in leadership (staff, officer, and non-commissioned officer development), tactics, disaster and emergency preparation and response, engineering, medical, cyber, aviation operation and maintenance, and culture and language among other topics. A more capable U.S. and Taiwanese force resulting from joint training and exercises would further deter CCP aggression toward Taiwan.

A cornerstone of any organization is effective leadership. Joint doctrine espouses that mission success depends upon the ability of “leaders at all echelons [to] exercise disciplined initiative and act aggressively and independently.”<sup>24</sup> Leader professional development activities have taken place with all of the current INDOPACOM partners over the past several years.<sup>25</sup> SPP provides a symbiotic relationship to learn together and from each other to strengthen leaders. Two geographically relevant examples of SPP leadership development can be drawn from U.S. partnerships with Indonesia and Malaysia. Members of the Hawaii National Guard and Tentara Nasional Indonesia received instruction from U.S. Air War College professors and exercised operational design in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2019.<sup>26</sup> The Washington National Guard and Malaysia completed a command post exercise, Bursama Warrior, in June 2022. The training focused on leadership development through an integrated staff “forcing them to work through a complex problem collectively, increasing interoperability and their ability to plan and conduct

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<sup>24</sup> CJCS, *Joint Operations*, J.P. 3-0, II-2.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The State Partnership Program: FY2018 Annual Report to Congress*, 15 February 2019, 64-76.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew Jackson, “Hawaii Guard Teams with Indonesia on Mission Planning,” National Guard, August 26, 2019, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/State-Partnership-Program/Article/1943859/hawaii-guard-teams-with-indonesia-on-mission-planning/>.



joint and coalition operations.”<sup>27</sup> Royal Malaysian Navy First Admiral Chan Peng Cheong described the professional development derived from Bursama Warrior as “tremendous” and “enormous.”<sup>28</sup> Similar activities conducted through a partnership between the U.S. and Taiwan would enable a more competent officer and NCO corps, leading to a more robust military organization capable of deterring adversarial actions.

SPP allows partners to share technical knowledge about weapon systems and specialized equipment to improve competency. “Everything is written in manuals, but if you don’t have the practical experience, you can make some preventable mistakes.”<sup>29</sup> This sentiment was expressed by Croatian Air Force Lt. Col. Eduard Perković, the group commander for the 194th Squadron, 91st Wing, during training with the Minnesota National Guard on newly acquired UH-60M helicopters. Similar interactions are also occurring in INDOPACOM.<sup>30</sup> The Oregon Air National Guard has been working with the Vietnam Air Defense-Air Force to improve fighter pilot proficiency.<sup>31</sup> In August 2022 the Nevada National Guard began training the Republic of Fiji Military Forces on newly provided explosive ordinance disposal equipment.<sup>32</sup> A \$1 billion sale of equipment to Taiwan, which includes sidewinder air-to-air missiles, harpoon air-to-sea missiles, and air defense radar logistical support, was approved by the Biden

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<sup>27</sup> Alyson Teeter, “Washington National Guard, Malaysia Conduct Joint Exercise,” National Guard, June 21, 2022, <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/State-Partnership-Program/Article/3068154/washington-national-guard-malaysia-conduct-joint-exercise/>.

<sup>28</sup> Kreiss, “Guard Strengthens Bond with Malaysia”.

<sup>29</sup> Sydney Mariette, “Partners in Flight: Minnesota National Guard and Croatian Armed Forces Collaborate Through State Partnership Program – Minnesota National Guard,” Minnesota National Guard, June 10, 2022, <https://ngmnpublish.azurewebsites.us/partners-in-flight-minnesota-national-guard-and-croatian-armed-forces-collaborate-through-state-partnership-program/>.

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The State Partnership Program: FY2018 Annual Report to Congress*, 15 February 2019, 64-76.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Burgess, “The US–Vietnam Comprehensive Partnership and the Key Role of Air Force Relations,” Air University (AU), December 13, 2021, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/2870567/the-usvietnam-comprehensive-partnership-and-the-key-role-of-air-force-relations/>.

<sup>32</sup> “Fiji Military Receives EOD Equipment and Training from the United States,” U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, August 24, 2022, <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/3138421/fiji-military-receives-eod-equipment-and-training-from-the-united-states/>.

administration in August 2022.<sup>33</sup> This is the latest of several decades of military sales approved by the executive branch to assist Taiwan's ability to defend itself. The impact of U.S.-provided equipment would be magnified by a state partnership with a state with similar capabilities. Expensive, specialized equipment is only as good as its operator; SPP provides an opportunity to share knowledge and lessons learned to improve the ability to use that equipment.

Cultural and language barriers can lead to inefficient or ineffective military operations during disasters or conflict. SPP allows partners to work together to remove those barriers before an emergency or wartime scenario. "The one thing it does for the National Guard is it allows our soldiers and airmen to really visit a lot of other countries, to look at the environment that they operate in, and to really see, in many cases, the same problems — just approached from a different angle."<sup>34</sup> This advantage identified by Gen. Hokanson would pay dividends in a partnership with Taiwan. U.S. servicemembers could gain an understanding of the Mandarin language and culture that would better prepare those members for an altercation with the PLA. In addition to language and culture U.S. soldiers and airmen would also gain an appreciation for the terrain and climate that would be encountered should hostilities occur on or around Taiwan.

### **PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Along with the development of interoperability and professional and technical capabilities, the state partnership program provides a rich environment to develop lasting personal relationships between members of both partner militaries. War is a human endeavor. As such, personal relations between leaders enable success. JP 3-0 promotes this ideal.

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<sup>33</sup> Matthew Lee, "US OKS \$1B Arms Sale to Taiwan as Tensions Rise with China," AP NEWS (Associated Press, September 3, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-congress-government-and-politics-8901fc7feafbdbc94e01055a7b1d997>.

<sup>34</sup> C. Todd Lopez, "More Chances to Participate in Exercises Will Enhance National Guard, Chief Says," U.S. Department of Defense, May 9, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3025605/more-chances-to-participate-in-exercises-will-enhance-national-guard-chief-says/>.

“Commanders should engage other leaders to build personal relationships and develop trust and confidence.”<sup>35</sup> Trust and confidence in partners gained through state partnership activities may be the most significant benefit of SPP. These relational attributes increase the likelihood that the partners will function well when working together. The greater strength projected through trusting partnerships is a deterrent to belligerence.

Guard members generally stay in the same organization much longer than active-duty personnel. This longevity presents an opportunity for long-term interaction between guard members and members of the partner military and allows “cultivation and maintenance of personal relationships among counterparts [that] may enable success.”<sup>36</sup> According to Gen Hokanson, “these partnerships are all about trust and familiarity.”<sup>37</sup> The Guard is especially well-suited for creating relationships with partners because of its “persistent and continual presence.”<sup>38</sup> Senior leaders from the state national guard and their foreign partners develop not only solid professional relationships but also strong personal relationships through continued engagement. These relations result in trust between leaders and as a result between organizations.

The unique “weekend warrior” experience of a traditional national guardsman also allows for developing military-civilian and civilian-civilian relationships. The operational design exercise between Hawaii and Indonesia is an excellent example of the unique opportunity that partnerships with the National Guard provide. One of the Hawaiian guardsmen that participated in that exercise was Maj Tulsi Gabbard.<sup>39</sup> At the time of the exercise, Gabbard was also a U.S.

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<sup>35</sup> CJCS, *Joint Operations*, J.P. 3-0, II-2.

<sup>36</sup> CJCS, *Joint Operations*, J.P. 3-0, I-9.

<sup>37</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>38</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>39</sup> Jackson, “Hawaii Guard Teams with Indonesia”

Congresswoman and presidential candidate. Gabbard lauded the “great benefit not only to those who participate, but to the U.S. efforts and interests in building these relationships that are strengthened through these engagements.”<sup>40</sup> Guardsmen bring capabilities, experiences, and connections from their military and civilian networks to the partnership, encouraging further relationships and driving mission success.

The benefit of strong, preexisting personal relationships was demonstrated during Russia’s recent invasions of Ukraine. Defense officials from Ukraine and the Baltic States coordinated with their partner states’ adjutant generals at the beginning of hostilities in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. These communications “provid[ed] invaluable information to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and inform[ed] the US response.”<sup>41</sup> California and Ukraine have participated in approximately 1,000 engagements since their partnership was established in 1993.<sup>42</sup> Maj. Gen. David Baldwin, California’s adjutant general, received a phone call from Ukrainian defense leaders within a half-hour of Russia’s invasion in March 2022 and several more during the first day requesting assistance.<sup>43</sup> Maj. Gen. Baldwin contributed the quick outreach to relationships: “They trust us because they know us.”<sup>44</sup> Ukraine’s ability to withstand Russia’s attack and outperform global expectations is “the payoff when you invest in partnerships, and what campaigning during peacetime can lead to in conflict or crisis” according to Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. C.Q. Brown.<sup>45</sup> This example demonstrates the value of SPP in

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<sup>40</sup> Jackson, “Hawaii Guard Teams with Indonesia”

<sup>41</sup> Lengyel, “Securing the Nation,” 7.

<sup>42</sup> Jim Greenhill, “Brown: ‘The National Guard ... Truly at the Heart of It All,’” Air National Guard, August 29, 2022, <https://www.ang.af.mil/Media/Article-Display/Article/3142380/brown-the-national-guard-truly-at-the-heart-of-it-all/>.

<sup>43</sup> Jim Garamone, “Ukraine-California Ties Show Worth of National Guard Program,” U.S. Department of Defense, March 18, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2971781/#:~:text=The%20California%20National%20Guard%20has%20had%20a%20close, become%20good%20friends%20over%20the%20past%2029%20years.>

<sup>44</sup> Greenhill and Sheely, “Hokanson: State Partnership Program”

<sup>45</sup> Greenhill, “Brown: The National Guard”.

the face of regional aggression. Although the partnership did not deter Russian aggression, Ukraine was better prepared and better equipped to defend itself. A partnership between the National Guard and Taiwan would provide similar benefits to the Western Pacific.

### COUNTERARGUMENT

Many may argue that further military cooperation in the form of a state partnership between the United States and Taiwan will ratchet up the tension in the region irrespective of the proven benefits identified above. Xi Jinping and the CCP's strategic aim is to bring about "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese state" by the 100th anniversary of the party in 2049.<sup>46</sup> The desired end state includes a re-unified Taiwan. The CCP has identified "compel[ing] Taiwan's leadership to the negotiation table on Beijing's terms" as a strategic objective it intends to accomplish by 2027.<sup>47</sup> China sees Taiwan as an internal issue that other world powers, especially the United States, should not be involved with.

The CCP is opposed to new partnerships between the U.S. and any other countries in China's neighborhood. This opposition was recently highlighted in the failure of the fledgling partnership with Nepal. The U.S. and Nepal agreed to participate in a partnership in 2019. However, Nepalese sentiment toward the arrangement soured before it could be formalized. Members of the Nepalese government referred to SPP as "a trap to involve Nepal in an anti-China military alliance," and they assumed the "impact on Sino-Nepal relations would be catastrophic."<sup>48</sup> SPP is threatening to China's sphere of influence. Many countries in the

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2021*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, November 03, 2021), 1.

<sup>47</sup> OSD, *Military and Security Developments*, 36.

<sup>48</sup> P K. Balachandran, "Nepal Backs Away From US State Partnership Program," *The Diplomat* (Tokyo: Tribune Content Agency LLC, 2022), <https://thediplomat.com/2022/06/nepal-backs-away-from-us-state-partnership-program/>.

western Pacific do not want to choose between the U.S. and China. This is not the case with Taiwan.

Formalizing a state partnership between Taiwan and the national guard would be viewed by the CCP as challenging China's sovereignty. It would undoubtedly lead to accusations that the U.S. is violating its own "one China" policy. The U.S. "one China" policy was defined in 1979: "the United States recognizes the PRC as the sole legal government of China but only acknowledges the Chinese position that Taiwan is part of China."<sup>49</sup> China has become more aggressive in its posturing regarding Taiwan as it has strengthened its military. Defense white papers released by the CCP in 2019 and 2022 both identify a willingness of the party to use force to "defeat separatism and external influence" related to Taiwan.<sup>50</sup> Regarding this Chinese rhetoric, some may see SPP as too risky.

Despite these contrary views, the more adept military force garnered from partnership activities will be more able to deter PRC aggression regardless of the CPC's contrary saber-rattling. The 2022 National Defense Strategy distinguishes a need to "urgently...strengthen deterrence, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) as our most consequential strategic competitor"<sup>51</sup>. SPP will develop U.S. and Taiwanese forces in a manner that will deter Chinese aggression.

Additionally, a partnership with China would not contradict current U.S. policy regarding China. The Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 required the United States to provide conventional

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<sup>49</sup> Michael J. Green, "What Is the U.S. 'One China' Policy, and Why Does It Matter?," Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 24, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-us-one-china-policy-and-why-does-it-matter>.

<sup>50</sup> People's Republic of China Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and State Council Information Office. *The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era*. August 2022

<sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, "Fact Sheet: 2022 National Defense Strategy," 2022, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF?source=GovDelivery>.

military technology to Taiwan to ensure its ability to defend itself.<sup>52</sup> The U.S. government has provided nearly \$24 billion in arms sales to Taiwan in the last decade.<sup>53</sup> In addition to weapons and technology, the Taiwan Relations Act also directs the U.S. to provide “defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.”<sup>54</sup> SPP is an effective way to train the Taiwanese military to use the equipment it is receiving from the U.S.

Furthermore, there is an interest from both the U.S and Taiwanese governments in pursuing a partnership at this time. In May 2022, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen expressed a desire to “deepen security ties in the face of a rising threat from China” by entering into a partnership with the National Guard.<sup>55</sup> Members of the U.S. Congress also hold this sentiment. Senator Tammy Duckworth and Senator John Cornyn sought to introduce a bipartisan bill, the Taiwan Partnership Act, in 2021 to study the feasibility of a state partnership with Taiwan.<sup>56</sup> The bill’s language was ultimately included in the 2022 National Defense Authorization Act.<sup>57</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The State Department, Department of Defense, and USINDOPACOM should support an NGB state partnership with Taiwan because, as former secretary of defense James Mattis noted, “nations with strong allies thrive, while those without stagnate and wither.”<sup>58</sup> A partnership with

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<sup>52</sup> “H.R.2479 - Taiwan Relations Act 96th Congress (1979-1980),” accessed September 16, 2022, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479>, 13.

<sup>53</sup> Green, “What Is the U.S. ‘One China’ Policy”

<sup>54</sup> “H.R.2479 - Taiwan Relations Act 96th Congress (1979-1980),” 2.

<sup>55</sup> Ben Blanchard, “Tsai Says U.S. National Guard Planning ‘Cooperation’ with Taiwan Military,” U.S. News & World Report, May 31, 2022, <https://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2022-05-31/tsai-says-u-s-national-guard-planning-cooperation-with-taiwan-military>.

<sup>56</sup> John Cornyn, “Cornyn, Duckworth Introduce Bill to Boost U.S.-Taiwanese Defense Cooperation,” United States Senator John Cornyn, Texas, July 20, 2021, <https://www.cornyn.senate.gov/content/news/cornyn-duckworth-introduce-bill-boost-us-taiwanese-defense-cooperation>.

<sup>57</sup> “S. 2762 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022,” 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Lengyel, “Securing the Nation,” 8.

Taiwan would improve interoperability between the U.S., Taiwan, and other allies and partners in the Western Pacific through joint training and exercises. Those joint activities would also provide an opportunity to develop the professional and technical capabilities of the members involved. Finally, pre-existing relations increase the probability of success. The partnership would allow participating members to build enduring personal relationships with their counterparts in the partner service. The advantages gained through the partnership would help to deter future PRC aggression and lead to greater stability in the western Pacific region.



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