



FACING CHINESE MARITIME AGGRESSION IN THE FIRST ISLAND CHAIN

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**I-Chung Lai, Prospect Foundation
CALD Regional Conference,
Miriam College Quezon City
11:00-12:15 April 3rd, 2025**

CHINESE MARITIME PRESENCE AND THE RELATED INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- South China Sea Artificial Island Built-up: 8 big artificial islands built-up as of 2021
- String of Pearl Strategy across the Indian Ocean
- Overseas Bases and Security Agreements after GSI, GDI and GCI declarification: Djibouti, possibly in Ream (Cambodia), Solomon Island, Vanuatu

SOUTH CHINA SEA ISLAND/ROCK GRAB

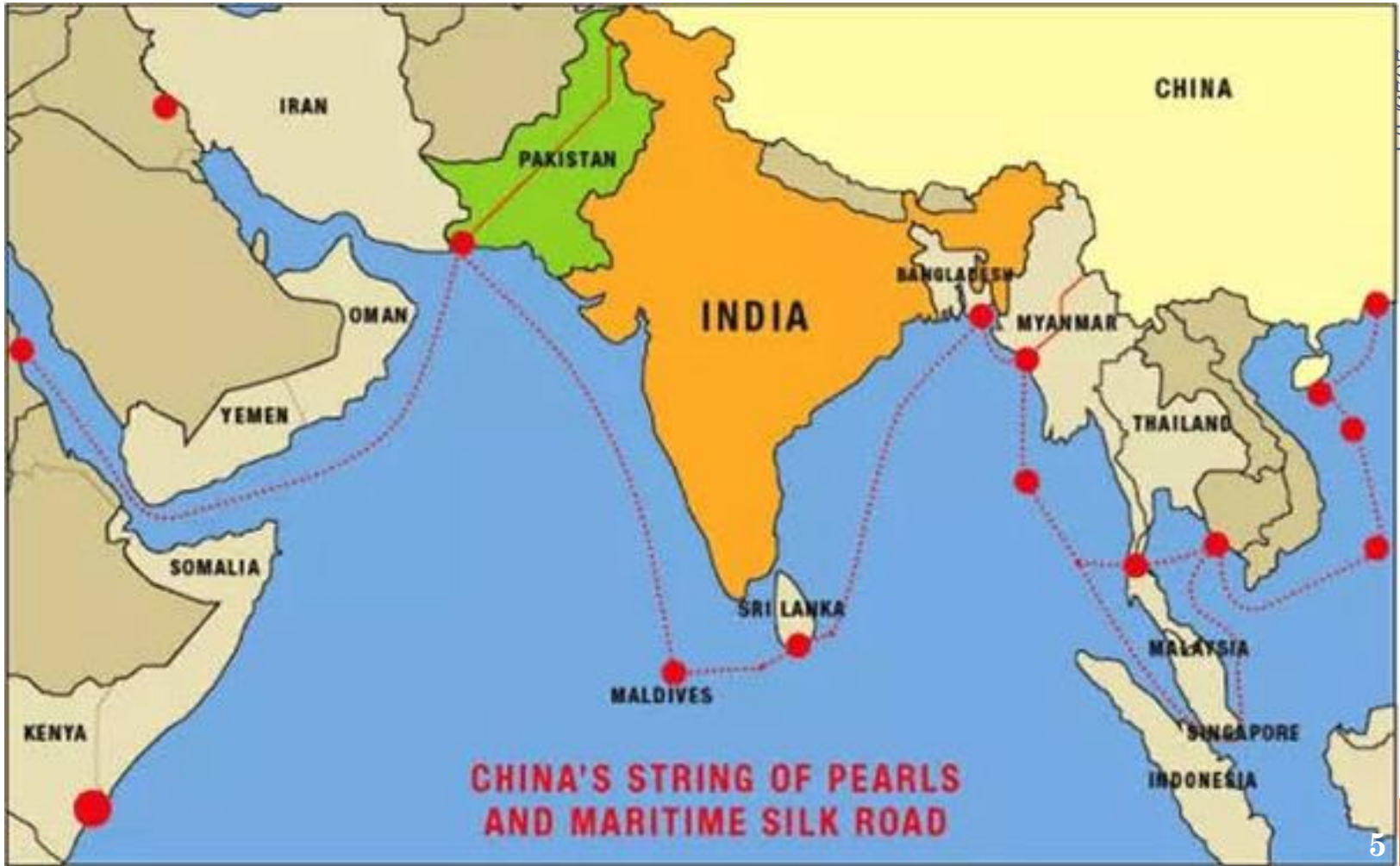


EXAMPLES OF PRC ARTIFICIAL ISLANDS



2025/4/4

STRING OF PEARL IN INDIAN OCEAN



PLA POSSIBLE OVERSEAS MILITARY BASES

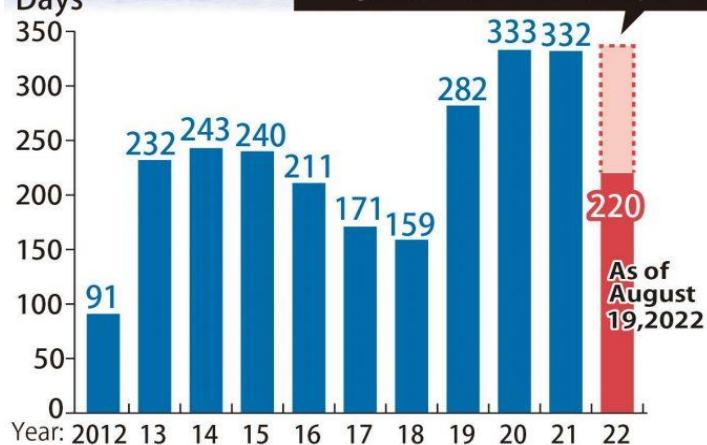


CHINESE MARITIME AGGRESSION

- East China Sea: Senkaku Island Intrusion
- Taiwan Proper (all around Taiwan)
- South China Sea: Against Philippine and Vietnam especially
- Increasing Assertive in Yellow Sea (ROK)

SENKAKU ISLAND INTRUSION (L) PRC WATER CANNON AGAINST PH (R)

Confirmed number of days in which Chinese government vessels have been inside Japan's contiguous zone near the Senkaku Islands (by year).



※ Information based on interviews with the Japan Coast Guard.
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JOINT SWORD 2024 B EXERCISE ON TAIWAN

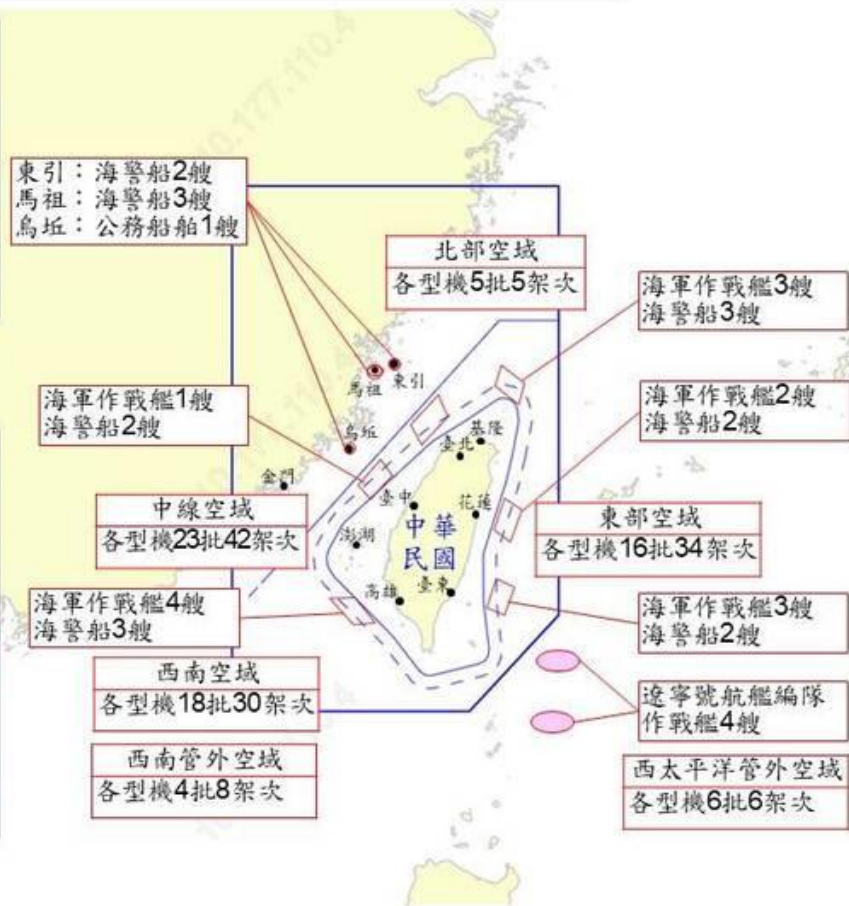
OCTOBER 14, 2024

資料時間：113年10月14日1600時

共軍對我從事「聯合利劍-2024B」演習概況

- 10月14日0502時中共東部戰區宣布在臺灣周邊海、空域實施「聯合利劍-2024B」演習。
- 對我執行聯合海空戰備警巡、要港要域封控、對陸對海打擊及奪取綜合控制權等演練課目。
- 本次共軍軍演計開設9處演習區(本島周邊6處、馬祖、東引、烏坵等3處)。

- 10月14日0502時起(持續中)，於我周邊海空域實施海空聯合軍事操演。
- 海上兵力
作戰艦17艘(其中4艘於東南應變區外)、海警(公務)船17艘(3艘於我北部海域、2艘於中線空域、3艘於西南海域、4艘東部海域、5艘於外島)。
- 空中兵力
主、輔戰機、直升機及無人機125架次，其中90架次進入我應變區。



SOUTH CHINA SEA ISSUE

- China tactic: bilateral dealing toward claimant states; establishing allies in ASEAN to prevent ASEAN from reaching harmful position toward PRC
- Bilaterally: China deals with Philippine, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia bilaterally in the dispute
- Multilaterally: dragged down ASEAN in the COC talk on SCS; utilizing some ASEAN members to prevent ASEAN from issuing common position which might jeopardize Chinese position
- Divide ASEAN into claimant states vs. non-claimant states and deepen the differences

TAIWAN'S POSITION ON SCS (AS I UNDERSTOOD)

- Taiwan has two islands in SCS (Prataus and Itu Aba) Taipei considered them as its own territory
- Peaceful resolution through political talk and no violence, respect the UNCLUS
- Taiwan does not consider the “11 dashed line as national boundary line (different from China’s 9 dashed line position)
- Taiwan does not accept 2016 Tribunal Ruling because: (1) it calls Taiwan as “Taiwan authority of China”; (2) Itu Aba ruled as a rock, not an island; and (3) The process has prevented Taiwan from presenting its own cases.
- Taiwan needs a Seat at the table for SCS Discussion

HOW TO CALL OUT CHINESE BEHAVIOR?

- Philippine: ICAD (Illegal, Coercive, Aggressive and Destructive)
- Taiwan: Gray Zone; Quasi-Military Operation
- Calling out PRC Actions is not enough. What to do after calling out PRC actions really matters
- Chinese tactic against Philippine (South Sea Fleet) is different from its action on Japan and Taiwan (East Sea Fleet). They start to look similar (coast guard involvement)
- Can ASEAN reach one position toward PRC (and back up Philippine)?

READING

- Chinese maritime menace already is in East Sea, Taiwan proper and SCS. It could go to South Pacific and Indian Ocean in the future.
- Chinese behavior in SCS is not about history, it is about obtaining strategic dominance by expelling US presence back to east of Hawaii to control the whole Asia
- War on Taiwan will horizontally expand to East Sea (Japan), SCS (Philippine and Vietnam), South Pacific (US and Australia), Malacca Strait (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia) and Indian Ocean (India)

RECOMMENDATION

- First Island Chain nation need to work together to counter Chinese ICAD/Gray Zone
- IPAC already focuses on China. Could CALD/LI also work on China and to facilitate the consolidation of SE Asia claimant states?
- Philippine to lead ASEAN in 2026: put East China Sea, SCS, Taiwan proper etc in the agenda of ARF, ADMM and EAS. Inviting US and the +5 nations(JP, SK, AU, NZ, IN) along with some like minded SE Asian countries to drive the COC discussion. (Need to prepare for PRC 2027 timeline)