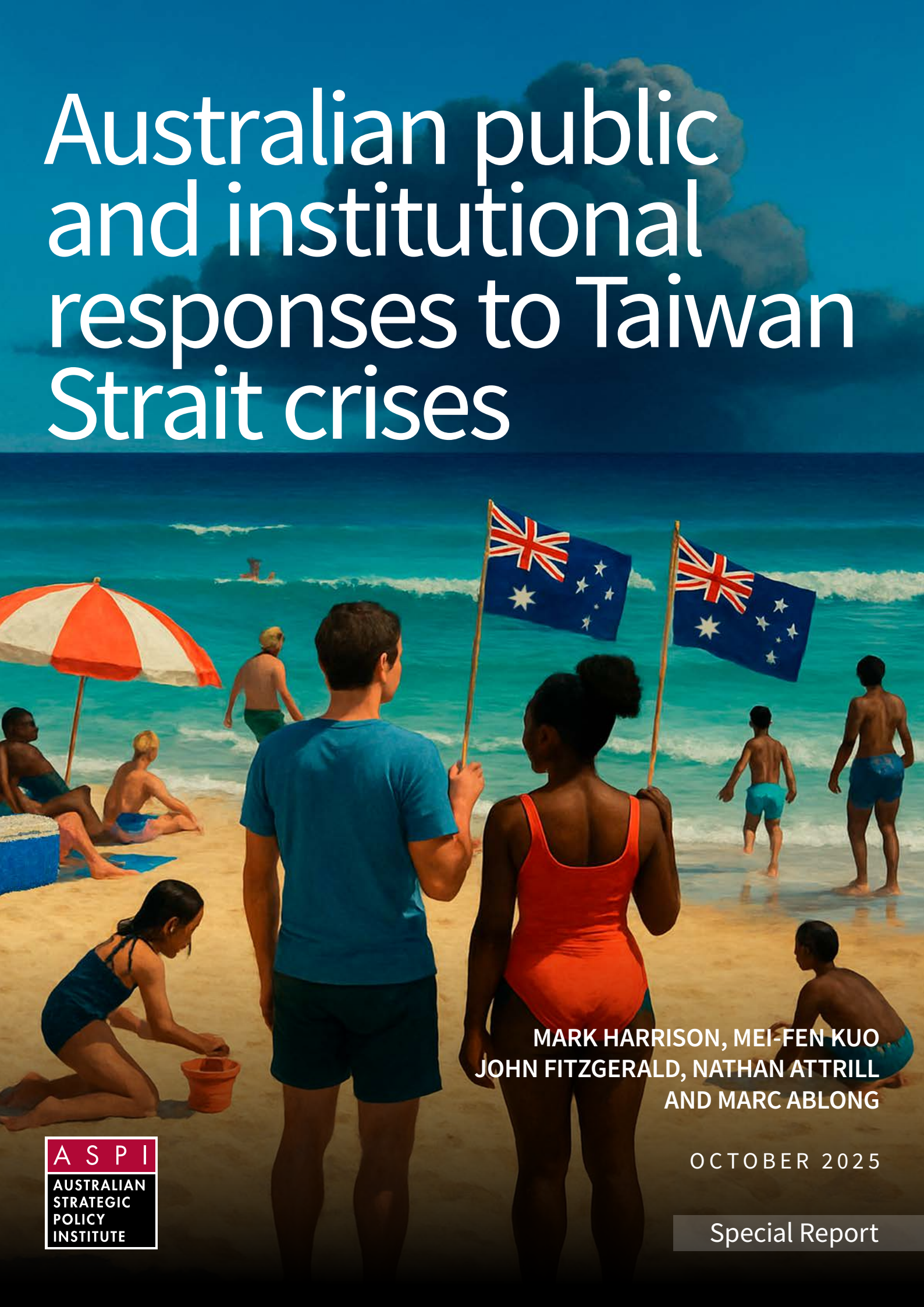
Australian public and institutional responses to Taiwan Strait crises



MARK HARRISON, MEI-FEN KUO
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OCTOBER 2025

Special Report

ASPI
AUSTRALIAN STRATEGIC POLICY INSTITUTE

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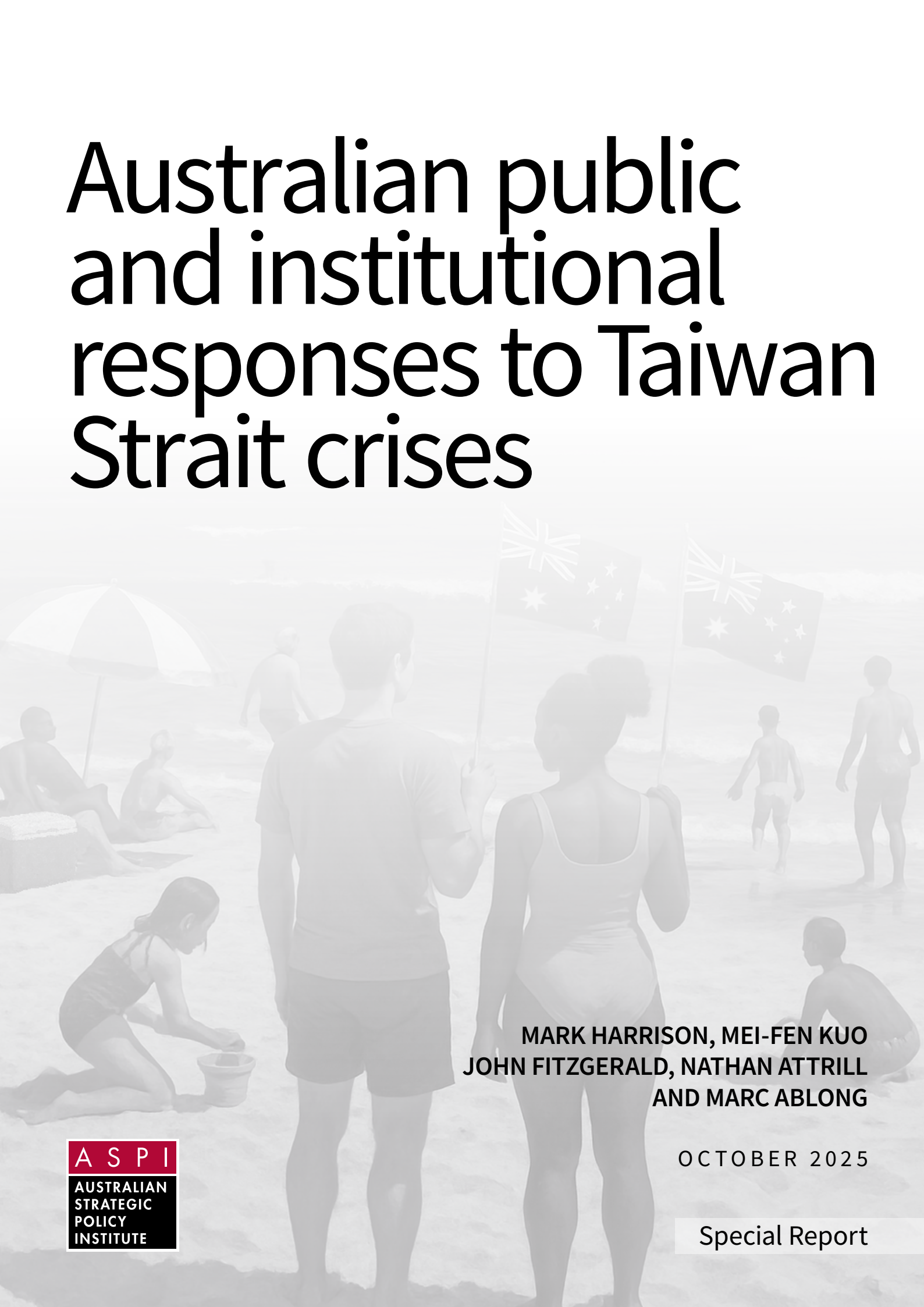
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Findings, policy implications and recommendations

This report has been developed pursuant to the terms of a Department of Defence Strategic Policy Grant Program grant provided to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) in 2024. The grant was given to ASPI to undertake an independent analysis of Australian public and institutional responses to Taiwan Strait crises. The project has modelled how key groups in Australia understand cross-strait relations in order to predict possible responses to crises in the Taiwan Strait.

The research aims to provide Defence with findings that gauge how the Australian public and policymakers are likely to interpret and respond to crises in the Taiwan Strait. That will also help to identify where public and institutional understanding is deficient or vulnerable to disinformation. This research can assist Defence to plan for whole-of-nation responses to regional contingencies by assessing the roles that key groups in Australia are likely to play during crises in the Taiwan Strait. Such an understanding could enable Defence to better identify public policy capacity and information needs for policy responses to such crises.

In order to capture how the term 'crisis' is defined in policy and institutional discourse, the project didn't apply a pre-given definition of 'crisis' in the Taiwan Strait. Equally, the project didn't differentiate between the severity of crises (events that affect stability across the Taiwan Strait or events that change the status of Taiwan). The spectrum of possible definitions, ranging from the belief that a crisis is already unfolding to the judgement that one is unlikely and avoidable over the next decade with appropriate policy settings, reflects the nature of policy and analytical capacity within the Australian system, as well as the intentional effects of grey-zone and multidomain activity designed to obscure and complicate definition.

For the purpose of testing perceptions of crisis definitions, the project applied a hypothetical scenario of a kinetic event following a People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) incursion into Taiwan's 12-nautical-mile airspace. From that scenario emerges a spectrum of potential outcomes, each carrying distinct policy and political implications that serve to animate debate on a Taiwan Strait crisis in Australia. The project didn't test any hypothetical scenarios related to other potential sources of crises involving the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the US, as such scenarios, including pre-emptive action directed at Australia, facilities in Australia or US facilities in region, are outside of the scope of this report.

In engaging with respondents, the project sought not to assume any judgements about the PRC, the Republic of China (ROC) or the current status of Taiwan Strait relations.[1] Rather, the project sought to elicit the views—positive, ambiguous or negative—of respondents based on their extant knowledge and understandings.

Project scope and focus

This project has modelled how key groups in Australia understand cross-strait relations in order to predict Australians' possible reactions to and perceptions of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

- The project undertook sentiment analysis to map narratives about the ROC and cross-strait relations in social and traditional media in Australia.
- That analysis shaped interviews and focus group activities with communities and corporate, media and educational leaders in a second stage (detailed below).

The project supports the development of a whole-of-nation approach to national defence and resilience, in line with the Defence Strategic Review and the National Defence Strategy.

- Defence can use the insights from this research to support whole-of-nation preparedness for contingencies affecting stability across the Taiwan Strait.

- The project provides an evidence base and model to gauge public responses to and institutional settings for Taiwan Strait contingencies. It also helps Defence assess vulnerabilities to disinformation and other forms of interference.
- As events in the Middle East and Ukraine demonstrate, this is important to Defence, as public and institutional opinion sets the context for government decisions, including the range of options that are politically feasible during a crisis.

Stage 1: Sentiment analysis mapped narratives about the ROC and cross-strait relations in social and mainstream media in Australia.

An initial sentiment analysis of social and traditional media was undertaken during the reporting period to baseline Australian sentiment and narratives associated with the ROC and cross-strait relations. To gauge the impact of significant events on public sentiment and narratives, we subsequently undertook in-depth sentiment analysis around specific activities and events that have generated Australian and global attention on the ROC and cross-strait issues (such as the 2022 Nancy Pelosi visit to the ROC, the 2024 Hualien earthquake and the 2024 ROC presidential and legislative elections, which resulted in the election of President Lai Ching-te). That analysis has enabled some initial conclusions to be drawn on the major sources of information that Australians use to inform themselves of the ROC and cross-strait relations, the major influencers generating content on those issues and the effects (positive and negative) that published content has on perceptions. Since the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the US in November 2024, we have seen a significant uptick in social and traditional media attention on the ROC and cross-strait relations.

Stage 2: Interviews and focus group activities were held with governments, communities and corporate, media and educational leaders and influencers across Australia.

Stage 2 interview and focus group activities with government (federal, state and territory, and municipal), communities, corporate, media and educational institutions and individuals have been conducted in Canberra, Hobart, Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney and Perth. One-on-one video teleconferences have also been held with institutions and individuals unable to attend during scheduled visits. Initial judgements from those interviews and focus group activities have been developed, including with respect to Australian perceptions of:

- national, subnational and organisational policies related to the ROC, the cross-strait relationship, the US–PRC–ROC relationship and broader geopolitical issues involving other regional and extra-regional actors in the cross-strait domain
- the current state of Australia–ROC relations and Australia–PRC relations, their magnitude and implications for organisations and individuals
- current and foreseeable cross-strait challenges
- the likelihood and consequences for Australia (nationally, institutionally and personally) of any deterioration in cross-strait relations
- the forms of risk management undertaken by organisations to mitigate risk to Australia, businesses, communities and individuals were a crisis in the Taiwan Strait to emerge
- the sources of information employed by Australians to generate perspectives
- known sources of disinformation and misinformation on these issues.

Stage 3: A public report on findings to the Department of Defence, through an ASPI Special Report with accompanying commentary (in *The Strategist*), launch events in Canberra and Washington (with recordings on YouTube and podcast), follow-on discussions with ASPI's partner think tanks, and scholarly journal outputs.

Caveats and constraints

This project encountered several important limitations that shape the scope and interpretation of its findings.

First, both traditional and social-media environments in Australia represent a narrowing segment of the national conversation. The general Australian media environment presents 'echo chambers' that limit the diversity and depth of public discourse on cross-strait relations. Media narratives are often event-driven, with little space for sustained or nuanced engagement with Taiwan Strait issues. That has resulted in a public understanding that's reactive, fragmented, and largely shaped by a limited pool of mainstream voices.

Australia's Chinese-language media landscape is significantly shaped by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Propaganda Department, primarily through mechanisms such as content partnerships, platform regulations (especially for WeChat), and the resulting self-censorship among local content creators. While some independent voices exist, and commercial imperatives can also shape content, the overall effect is a constrained diversity of perspectives available to Chinese-speaking audiences in Australia. Those dynamics raise ongoing concerns about foreign influence and its implications for social cohesion and democratic discourse.[2]

Second, there's a selection bias inherent in stakeholder engagement. Those willing to participate in interviews and focus groups often have either professional interest in or prior awareness of Taiwan Strait–related issues, which may skew responses towards more informed or engaged perspectives. Conversely, those most vulnerable to disinformation or disengagement are least likely to be represented.

Finally, it's important to acknowledge that not all voices are equally heard in public conversations about a Taiwan Strait crisis. In Australia, individuals from Taiwanese or ethnic Chinese backgrounds may choose not to speak publicly due to fears of being misrepresented, targeted or pressured, either socially or politically. That results in a gap in the perspectives captured by public discourse, making it more difficult to fully understand the range of communities' experiences and concerns, particularly among those most affected by a potential crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Findings and recommendations on sentiment in Australia

The overall key finding from this project related to Australian *sentiment* on cross-strait issues is as follows.

Finding 1: There's no singular or consistently relied-upon source through which Australians inform themselves about the ROC and cross-strait relations.

The public information environment on this issue is fragmented, inconsistent and predominantly reactive to events. For the Department of Defence, that presents a substantial challenge in mobilising the national support and social licence necessary for any potential Australian military involvement in crises in the Taiwan Strait. Communication between the ADF and Department of Defence and the Australian polity will occur in a fluid and congested information space. In the absence of respected and authoritative national voices, including voices in different culturally and linguistically diverse information ecosystems, that can cut through mis- and disinformation and support national messaging, the Department of Defence will be required to fight the 'information war' on multiple battlefields simultaneously.

Other findings are as follows.

Traditional media

Australian traditional media coverage of the ROC is overwhelmingly event driven. Reporting tends to spike during moments of geopolitical tension or major developments, such as high-level diplomatic visits, natural disasters or elections, but otherwise remains limited in scope and frequency. Outside of such periods, the ROC receives minimal sustained coverage in absolute terms, as well as in comparison to other international events.

When the ROC is covered in general reporting in the Australian press, the terminology used to describe its status is often inconsistent. Taiwan may be referred to as a 'country', a 'province', or simply 'the island' within or across articles and publications, leading to confusion among audiences. That inconsistency contributes to a broader lack of clarity about the ROC's international status and Australia's own position regarding the issue.

That confusion is particularly evident in public understanding of Australia's one-China policy. Policymakers, commentators and analysts aren't always aware of the language of the 1972 Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Australia and the PRC, or of the distinction between Australia's one-China policy and Beijing's one-China principle. That's likely to result in poor understanding by the public of the strategic ambiguity that has underpinned Australian diplomacy for decades and, consequently, can result in widespread misconceptions regarding the legal and diplomatic status of the ROC.

Coverage of the ROC in the Australian media also reflects broader editorial and ownership structures. Outlets tend to frame ROC-related issues in ways that align with their institutional perspectives on the PRC, the US and Australian foreign policy more broadly. Notably, there are currently only two Australian journalists permanently based in the ROC: Kathleen Calderwood (*ABC*) and Helen Davidson (*The Guardian*). Most other reporting is conducted remotely or aggregated from international wire services. Nonetheless, the presence of Australian journalists in Taipei has served to raise the quality of reporting from the ROC.

Social media

Social-media commentary largely mirrors the trends observed in traditional media. Most Taiwan-related content is event-driven and limited in scope, and few posts generate widespread engagement or public debate. There's a limited presence of dedicated social-media accounts that consistently focus on the ROC or cross-strait issues within the Australian context.

A small number of activists and commentators do engage regularly on these topics. For example, two Brisbane-based political activists operate Twitter/X handles that regularly post Taiwan-related content (for example, @DrewPavlou, @TaiwanFreedom89). However, the reach and influence of such accounts remain modest. In comparison to other foreign-policy or domestic issues, Taiwan generates limited viral content or perception-shifting engagement online.

Australian think tanks and research institutions with a foreign policy focus, such as ASPI, the Lowy Institute, the United States Studies Centre and the Australia–China Relations Institute, do maintain a presence on social media and periodically produce commentary on the ROC. Yet those outputs tend to reach niche policy audiences and have minimal influence on broader public discourse.

Diaspora information networks

Members of the Taiwanese-Australian communities typically don't rely on Australian traditional or social media for information about the ROC. Instead, they draw on alternative sources, including Taiwanese news outlets, YouTube channels and interpersonal networks—most notably family and friends still residing in the ROC. Those networks provide more immediate and direct access to developments in the ROC, and the communities are very well informed but remain largely disconnected from broader Australian media narratives. Similarly, Chinese-Australian communities rely on alternative media sources, including Chinese-language Australian media, PRC-based media outlets and social-media networks.

Impact of influencers on public commentary

Overall, there are few Australian influencers or public figures who consistently engage with the ROC or cross-strait relations in ways that shape public opinion. Relative to other topics, the volume of mentions, the reach of posts and the likelihood of viral content remain low. The ROC doesn't currently feature prominently in the Australian digital influencer ecosystem; nor does it attract the level of sustained attention necessary to influence national sentiment in a meaningful way.

Sentiment distribution and drivers

Sentiment analysis indicates that public attitudes towards the ROC are relatively evenly distributed across positive and negative viewpoints, reflecting other polling data on Australian attitudes to ROC-related issues. However, those sentiments are likely to reflect broader societal orientations towards Australia's geopolitical role, or the roles of the US or the PRC, rather than ROC-specific factors.

Generally, commentary that's supportive of the US–Australia alliance, wary of the PRC and aligned with democratic values expresses positive sentiment towards the ROC. Conversely, individuals who are critical of US foreign policy, sympathetic to Beijing's narratives or concerned about Australian involvement in overseas conflicts are more likely to express scepticism or indifference regarding the ROC.

Crucially, overall Taiwan knowledge levels remain low. There's limited public understanding of the ROC's political system, its complex relationship with the PRC, or why there are risks associated with cross-strait tensions. Media coverage, both traditional and social, tends to lack the background and analytical depth needed to foster informed engagement. As a result, public responses to ROC-related issues are often superficial, event-contingent and lacking in strategic nuance.

Defence policy recommendation

The Department of Defence, with other departments of state in support, should consider developing preparatory contingency communication strategies for possible crisis scenarios. Those strategies should target the various and diverse sectors of the Australian polity necessary for national support to Defence during a crisis (state and territory governments, industry and community service organisations), as well as broader messaging to build and sustain the social licence for a range of ADF activities during a crisis.

Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government should consider developing consistent, multilingual, public communications on cross-strait and regional security issues, including educational campaigns tailored for both general and diaspora audiences.

Findings and recommendations on perceptions of crises in the Taiwan Strait

The overall key finding from this study related to Australian *perceptions* of crises in the Taiwan Strait is as follows.

Finding 2: Perceptions of crises in the Taiwan Strait are bifurcated between those who believe that such a crisis will have limited impact on Australia and those who believe that it will be an existential crisis for Australia. As a consequence of that bifurcation, risk-management and crisis-response capabilities vary considerably across the nation.

Through focus groups, interviews and other activities, this project has identified two alternative and competing perceptions of the impacts of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Some interlocutors opine that a crisis would have limited impact on Australia, treating it akin to a natural disaster, while still having significant but unpredictable and unplannable consequences for Australia. Other interlocutors consider a Taiwan Strait crisis to be an existential threat to Australia, identifying profound strategic, economic and societal consequences should such a crisis eventuate.

Institutions and individuals across sectors are generally aware that a crisis could affect Australia, but most lack defined risk thresholds or response protocols, leading to a largely reactive rather than proactive stance. That divided perception extends to diaspora communities. While many acknowledge the seriousness of a Taiwan Strait crisis, there's a significant gap in preparedness and consistent recognition of the risks.

More generally, while recent polling has identified a declining sense of safety and security in the Australian polity,[3] the risk-management activities of many Australian organisations and community groups continue to underestimate the potential impacts, and those groups are ill-prepared for possible crises.[4]

Given that lack of understanding about the consequentiality of potential crises in the Taiwan Strait, Australian governments should work across the jurisdictions to set an example of balanced and forthright public discussion about the risks of conflict in the Taiwan Strait, and so provide a lead for communities, think tanks and media in canvassing the risks and consequences for Australia. This wouldn't involve 'beating the drums of war', but rather alerting the Australian public to the sound of once-distant war machines now encircling Australian shores and the challenges of deterring such encirclement.

There remains a significant gap in the academic discourse on Taiwan Strait–related issues within the Australian university sector. Consideration should be given to the allocation of funding for Taiwan studies programs at universities, particularly those focused on the geopolitical and security implications of Taiwan's history and current situation. It's also vital to establish academic–military partnerships to ensure that research on the ROC's security dynamics is well funded and protected from foreign interference.

To address the mixed perceptions across government, university, industry and community sectors of the Australian polity, government should consider establishing public initiatives that help Australians better understand the ROC's strategic role, and potentially provide industry, in particular, with better advice on how it can engage with (and refer to) the ROC. Additionally, clarity in government communication is essential. Avoiding references that could be perceived as ambiguous—such as calling Taiwan a 'province of China'—would reduce the risk of contradictions in future policy decisions. That can help to ensure that Australia's public stance on the ROC remains consistent and clear in the event of escalation. By officially recognising the Taiwanese communities in the Census (rather than treating them as 'Other Asians'), Australia would gain a clearer picture of its demographic makeup, helping to shape policies that better support Taiwanese-Australians.

Australian businesses, subnational governments and media, education and community organisations should move to develop and consolidate closer relations with counterparts in the ROC, to foster understanding of Taiwan's culture and society and to enhance Australian understanding of the risks and consequences of conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

In concert with allies and partners, Australian governments should continue to stress the value of the US-led postwar order for upholding democracy and the rule of law. They should pay greater attention to the everyday risks to Australia's way of life from the breakdown of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, the emergence of a Sino-centric regional order, and likely nuclear proliferation among regional states in the absence of US comprehensive deterrence.

The Australian Government should prepare an emergency economic response plan to address the potential impacts of a Taiwan Strait crisis. That could include setting up a special economic crisis response team to monitor global supply-chain disruptions and adjust Australia's diplomatic and trade strategies accordingly.

In view of the devastating consequences for Australia of a Taiwan Strait crisis, resources need to be channelled to government agencies responsible for designing and implementing risk-mitigation strategies. The federal government needs to take the lead in prompting business associations, industries, state and local governments, universities and community organisations to start planning and acting now for any likely contingency in the Taiwan Strait.

Community organisations need to start planning and allocating resources to provide support services for affected communities.

To address those issues, it's crucial to include more Taiwanese-Australian voices, including new-generation voices, in multicultural advisory bodies and security discussions. At the same time, Chinese-Australian voices also need to be more effectively engaged, with recognition of the community's internal diversity and differences of political opinion. There needs to be a framework for promoting social cohesion that recognises Taiwanese-Australians as a

distinct group, while managing potential friction points between Chinese and Taiwanese organisations competing for resources and recognition.

To counter disinformation efforts, Australia needs to invest in public education campaigns that provide accurate information about Taiwan's strategic importance. Those campaigns should focus on geopolitical analysis and the risks posed by misinformation. Furthermore, support should be given to community-based initiatives aimed at countering disinformation, which could help protect the integrity of public discourse.

In anticipation of a Taiwan Strait crisis, the Australian Government should give urgent consideration to mitigating grave risks to Australia's national interest and social cohesion presented by PRC-based social-media platforms. Given the challenges of the PRC's 'Great Firewall' (for instance, during events like the 2019–2020 Hong Kong protests, the PRC Government uses the great firewall to censor sensitive words, modify search results and pressure global tech companies to remove content critical of the government), sufficient warning should be given so that communities likely to be affected can switch platforms to maintain contact with family, friends and business clients, should their current platforms be outlawed or otherwise rendered ineffective.

Subordinate findings and policy recommendations include the following.

2A: Institutions are aware but unprepared

Many sectors recognise that a Taiwan Strait crisis could affect Australia, but few have defined risk thresholds or response protocols.

Defence policy recommendation

The Department of Defence should consider undertaking information-sharing dialogues with the key sectors of the Australian polity necessary for national support to Defence during a crisis. Such dialogues should aim to build better understanding of the impacts of potential crises in those sectors that are important to the defence effort.

Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government should consider engaging industry and the community in cross-sector scenario planning that links regional tensions to concrete national risks (such as risks to trade, social cohesion and supply chains).

2B: Diaspora communities are misrepresented in crisis planning

Taiwanese-Australians are frequently misidentified as part of the Chinese diaspora, despite their distinct identities and political orientations. Community tensions are often misunderstood or ignored by institutions.

Defence policy recommendation

The Department of Defence should consider collaborating with the Office for Social Cohesion in the Department of Home Affairs to identify and engage with the key Taiwanese-Australian and Chinese-Australian communities in planning for potential crises.

Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government, through the Office for Social Cohesion in the Department of Home Affairs, should consider improving diaspora engagement frameworks to recognise intracommunity diversity. The Office should work with those communities to co-design policies that reflect the distinct identities and needs of Taiwanese-Australians, Chinese-Australians and others of Asian ethnicity likely to be affected by crises in the Taiwan Strait.

2C: Identity doesn't equate to a political position

Ethnicity or national origin doesn't reliably predict political views on cross-strait issues. Pro-democracy or pro-ROC independence perspectives are found across Chinese- and Taiwanese-born individuals, and vice versa, and those political views can be strongly held.

Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government should avoid tokenistic consultation. Rather, it should engage in processes that prioritise lived experience, political awareness and meaningful community engagement over simplistic demographic proxies, including through meaningful face-to-face dialogues noted in other recommendations in this report.

2D: Preparedness is uneven across sectors

While some large businesses model geopolitical risk, small to medium-sized enterprises, universities and state governments are often disengaged or reluctant to plan for a Taiwan contingency. Universities, in particular, underperform in Taiwan engagement and scenario preparedness.

Defence policy recommendation

The Department of Defence should consider undertaking preparatory scenario-planning activities with the key sectors of the Australian polity necessary for national support to Defence during a crisis. Such tabletop exercises should aim to build better national preparedness for potential crises in those sectors that are important to the defence effort.

Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government should consider providing incentives and frameworks for ROC-specific contingency planning across sectors, with clear roles for institutions beyond the federal government.

2E: Mis- and disinformation undermine community resilience

PRC-aligned social-media channels restrict political discourse and promote apolitical content, dulling diaspora awareness. Mis- and disinformation—including narratives generated by artificial intelligence (AI)—weaken trust and preparedness.

Defence policy recommendation

The Department of Defence should consider the development of a counter-mis/disinformation strategy aimed at providing factual information and authoritative information sources that support national defence efforts.

Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government should consider investing in community-centred media literacy programs. It should coordinate with trusted diaspora organisations to disseminate accurate, culturally relevant, information.

2F: Redefining the national interest

Top-down assumptions about Australia's national interest fail to capture grassroots concerns. Taiwanese and Chinese diaspora communities experience geopolitical tensions differently, and strategic planning must account for that.

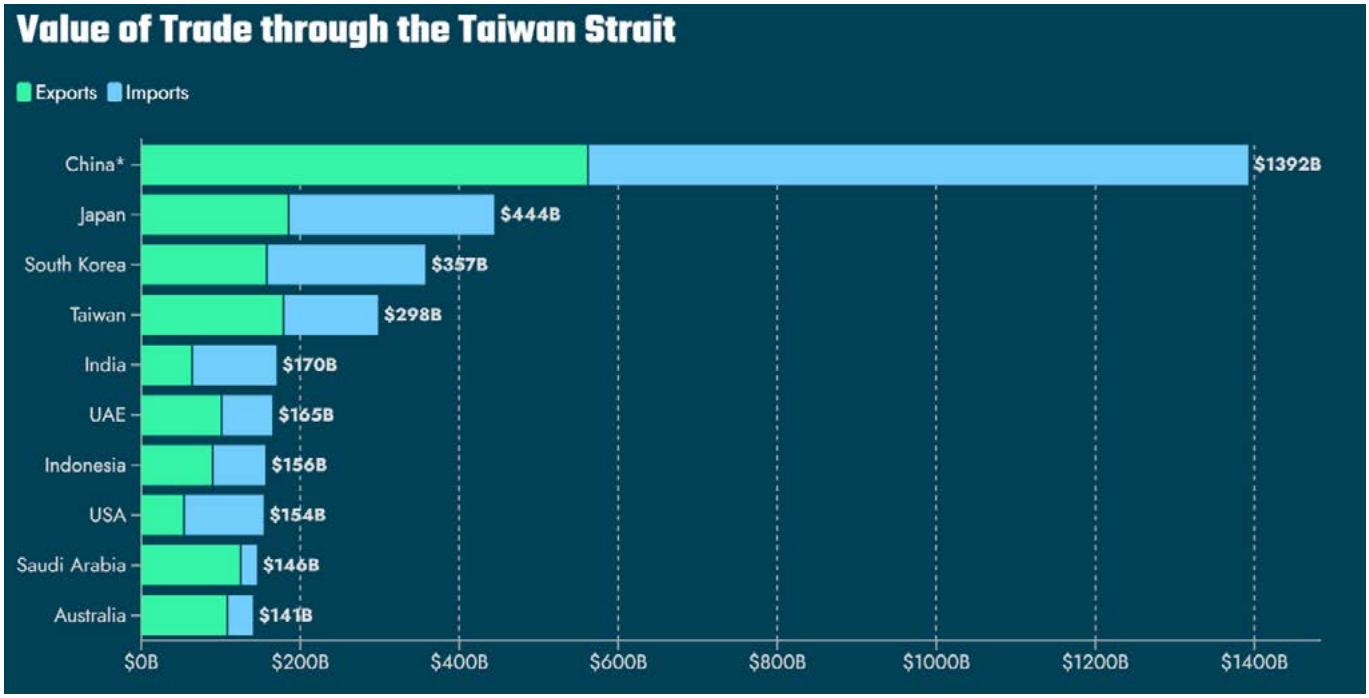
Government policy recommendation

The Australian Government should ensure that the diaspora consultation is embedded in security and preparedness planning—not just as a reactive measure, but as an active, co-designed process.

Introduction: The Taiwan Strait in Australian discourse

The Taiwan Strait is no longer a remote geopolitical concern—it sits at the heart of strategic conversations shaping Australia's future in the Indo-Pacific. As tensions between the PRC and the ROC continue to intensify, any disruption in the strait could have immediate consequences for Australia's security alliances, economy (Figure 1), sea lines of communication and supply chains, and social cohesion.

Figure 1: Value of trade through the Taiwan Strait



Source: Matthew P Funaiole, Brian Hart, David Peng, Bonny Lin, Jasper Verschuur, *Crossroads of commerce: how the Taiwan Strait propels the global economy*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2024, online.

A crisis in the Taiwan Strait—whatever it's catalyst or cause, whether diplomatic, military or otherwise—would not only test Australia's alliance commitments with the US and our security arrangements with Japan, the Philippines and others, but also expose gaps in our national preparedness across government, business, civil society and communities, including most particularly those of Asian descent.

Yet, public understanding of Taiwan's strategic importance remains limited. This report seeks to address that gap by mapping Australian sentiment, institutional awareness, and the potential consequences of cross-strait conflict for the nation's stability and security.

Contours of a crisis

As we've noted, this project has not applied a pre-given definition of 'crisis' in the Taiwan Strait, in order to enable and animate dialogue perceptions of Australian communities.

Contingencies in the Taiwan Strait are generally viewed along an escalation ladder, with increasing levels of geopolitical risk and economic disruption. The lowest rung of the escalation ladder could involve economic, legal and other coercive measures, often referred to as 'lawfare' or 'cognitive warfare'. The PRC has often used trade restrictions and import bans on Taiwanese goods, targeting specific industries, such as agriculture and food, to inflict economic pain and influence political outcomes in the ROC. That also includes pressuring multinational corporations to adopt

Beijing's political position on the ROC.[5] The PRC has concurrently employed legal coercive measures, such as asserting legal claims and applying domestic laws to international matters.[6]

The next rung of the escalation ladder could see grey-zone tactics, which are aggressive acts designed to stay below the threshold of conventional warfare, that exploit ambiguity in order to maximise pressure while minimising the risk of a full-scale military conflict.[7] Such tactics could include:

- *military and security pressure:* including increasingly frequent incursions by People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft and naval vessels into ROC's air defence identification zone and across the Taiwan Strait median line; those actions aim to normalise military presence and erode the ROC's effective control of its air and maritime zones
- *disinformation and cyber operations:* targeting Taiwanese Government agencies and critical infrastructure with cyberattacks, and launching massive disinformation campaigns (cognitive warfare) to undermine public confidence, sow internal division and influence elections
- *China Coast Guard operations:* deploying the coast guard for 'routine law-enforcement patrols' near Taiwanese islands to assert Beijing's jurisdiction, often intertwining with paramilitary maritime militia forces to harass Taiwanese vessels
- *sabotage:* such as severing undersea cables, as seen in incidents around Taiwan's islands, as a tactic to disrupt communications and isolate the islands.[8]

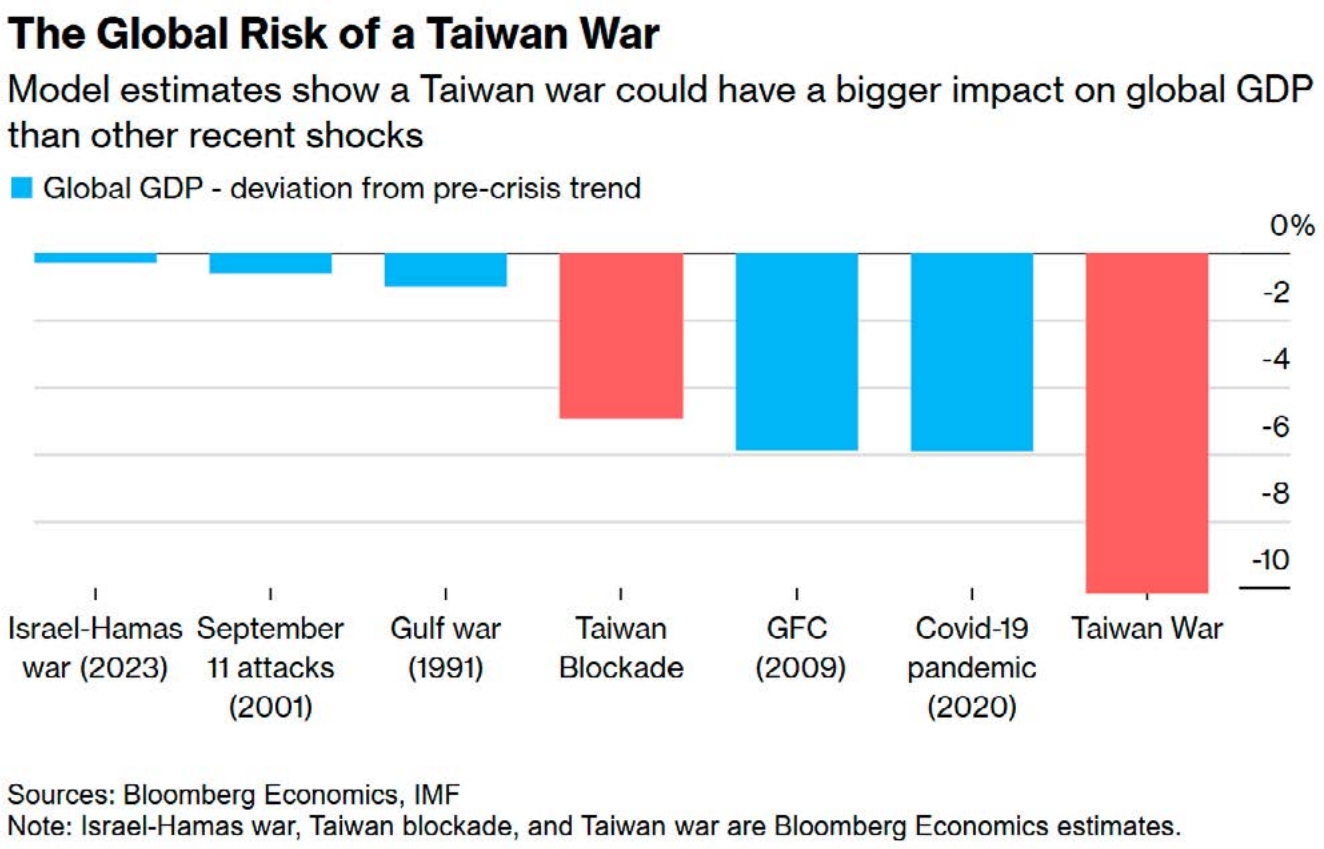
Those modalities of conflict can also be understood as a spectrum of warfare—information, political, economic and military—applied in different combinations by Beijing towards the goal of unification. This analytical approach tests the notion of a visible sequence of actions by Beijing leading towards a military event and underscores the policy challenge of identifying a singular moment of crisis.

A more severe escalation would be an informal or formal quarantine, an attempt to frame the action as law enforcement, or a military blockade of Taiwan's ports and airspace, which would be an act of war under international law. Such a quarantine or blockade would attempt to halt critical imports and exports.

The highest rung of the escalation ladder could involve a full-scale amphibious invasion, employing large-scale kinetic military operations in and around Taiwan.

The economic cost of an all-out military conflict has been estimated by Bloomberg Economics at US$10 trillion (Figure 2).[9] Organisations such as the International Monetary Fund have suggested that the costs would far eclipse all other major recent global economic shocks—such as the 2008 global financial crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Ukraine War (to date)—due to the essential role of the ROC in the global semiconductor supply chain.[10] Australia and other regional players would face huge trade dependency risks in any scenario involving the loss of trade from the Taiwan Strait.[11]

Figure 2: The risk of a Taiwan War to global GDP



Note: Figures for the Israel–Hamas war, the Taiwan blockade and the Taiwan War are Bloomberg Economics estimates.
Sources: Bloomberg Economics, International Monetary Fund.

It should also be noted that scenarios exist beyond the assimilation of Taiwan into the PRC. Whether through a grey-zone campaign of coercion, a quarantine or blockade, or a military invasion, any forced assimilation would have far-reaching consequences for both the ROC and the broader region. The most immediate and critical consequence would be the dissolution of the ROC's democratic government and the imposition of the CCP's authoritarian system. The ROC isn't Hong Kong, and analysts have suggested that the imposition of CCP control of Taiwan would entail:

- *political repression:* involving a crackdown on dissent, opposition parties and all institutions of self-rule; reports suggest that the goal would be to assert political control and install a compliant, puppet-like regime or fully integrate the island's governance structure into the PRC
- *erosion of freedoms:* the loss of fundamental freedoms currently enjoyed by Taiwanese citizens, including freedom of speech, assembly and the press, akin to the erosion of autonomy seen in Hong Kong under the National Security Law[12]
- *cultural and social assimilation:* a concerted effort to suppress Taiwanese identity, language and culture, promoting instead a unified 'Chinese' national identity as defined by the PRC.

A forced annexation is likely to be met with resistance. A segment of the population, highly aware of the PRC threat, would be likely to resist occupation, leading to a prolonged period of instability and internal security operations.[13] The Taiwanese economy would, consequentially, be severely damaged, especially if the assimilation involves kinetic conflict or a prolonged blockade/quarantine.

Australia's responses to previous crises in the Taiwan Strait (1954, 1958 and 1996)

Australia's response to tensions in the Taiwan Strait has always been shaped by its alliance commitments, strategic geography and prevailing cultural perceptions of Asia.

In 1954, the first Taiwan Strait crisis erupted as the PRC bombarded offshore islands held by the ROC. The Menzies government's stance was filtered through the early Cold War lens and its alignment with the US and Britain. Canberra endorsed the US policy of supporting the ROC as part of the broader containment strategy against communism in Asia. Prime Minister Menzies and External Affairs Minister Casey were reluctant to get involved in a war over the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. They believed that those islands weren't strategically vital to the defence of Taiwan and that a conflict there could easily escalate into a wider war with the PRC and, potentially, the Soviet Union. Despite its hesitation about the offshore islands, the Menzies government made it clear to the US that Australia would support its ally if the conflict were to escalate into a major war. That was a central tenet of Australia's foreign policy at the time, when it had recently formalised its security alliance with the US through the ANZUS Treaty in 1951. In common with a number of countries, the Menzies government pursued a diplomatic solution, in which the PRC would be recognised, but Taiwan would also be secured under international protection. It proposed that the Nationalist forces of the ROC withdraw from the offshore islands in exchange for a multinational guarantee of Taiwan's security, in order to reduce the immediate flashpoint for conflict. Menzies was keenly aware of public opinion in Australia, which, according to his own statements to the US, would support a 'war in the defence of freedom' but wouldn't back a war over the offshore islands themselves. His government's actions were calibrated to prevent a conflict that lacked broad public support.[14]

Four years later, the PRC's renewed artillery bombardment of Quemoy (Jinmen) and Matsu again brought the Taiwan issue into sharp focus. By that point, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) had been established, and Canberra's position echoed 1954: diplomatic solidarity with Washington and strong rhetorical support for Taiwan's defence. Unlike the more vocal and direct diplomacy Australia undertook during the earlier 1954–55 Taiwan Strait crisis, the Menzies government's response in 1958 was more muted. It didn't publicly align with the US's more confrontational rhetoric against the PRC. Instead, it focused on private, behind-the-scenes communication with its allies. Australia made it clear to the US that, while it supported the defence of Taiwan, it wouldn't support military action to defend the smaller, militarily insignificant offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Prime Minister Menzies argued that Australian public opinion wouldn't support a war over those islands. That stance differentiated Australia from the US, which was taking a harder line on the defence of the islands. The Australian Government preferred diplomatic solutions to military escalation. It believed that a military conflict over the offshore islands could lead to a wider war, potentially involving nuclear weapons. Australian officials, including Menzies, engaged in discussions with US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to express their concerns and encourage a more restrained approach. Australia's position during the 1958 crisis was part of a broader foreign policy strategy under Menzies to balance its loyalty to 'great and powerful friends' like the UK and the US with its own regional interests. The government sought to maintain the integrity of its alliances while avoiding being drawn into a conflict that could be detrimental to its own security and interests.[15]

Those broad policy positions were mediated by an ongoing policy debate about diplomatic recognition of the PRC. Policy leaders such as RG Casey had a meaningful grasp of the internal social and political dynamics within Taiwanese society, including the problematic status of the Nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan since 1945.

By 1996, the ROC had undergone a profound transformation, lifting martial law (1987), democratising, and preparing for its first direct presidential election. In order to influence that election, the PRC conducted missile tests that bracketed Taiwan. The tests were intended to intimidate Taiwanese voters, prompting the US to dispatch two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region. Australia's Howard government adopted a markedly different tone from the Cold War era. While affirming support for peaceful resolution and the principle of non-coercion, Canberra avoided any statement that might be construed as a military commitment to the ROC. The one-China policy, by then firmly institutionalised, shaped both diplomatic and media discourse over this crisis.[16]

The last high-level official Australian contact with the ROC was the visit by Prime Minister Harold Holt in 1966. While senior ministers such as the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister no longer officially engage with their Taiwanese counterparts, ministerial meetings in portfolios such as trade, investment and energy have occurred.[17] Those meetings, often framed as 'consultations', are a key part of the unofficial relationship. For example, Australia holds annual bilateral economic consultations with the ROC. Visits by cross-party parliamentary delegations from Australia to the ROC are a regular feature of the unofficial relationship. Those visits, while not at the highest executive level, involve senior and influential members of parliament and senators, who meet with their Taiwanese counterparts, including the President. For instance, a cross-party delegation of Australian parliamentarians met with President Tsai Ing-wen in 2024.

From 1954 to 1996, Australia's responses to crises in the Taiwan Strait evolved from ideological solidarity with 'Free China' to strategic hedging under the constraints of the one-China policy (see box). The alliance with the US remains the constant anchor, but the ROC's symbolic role has changed from a moral ally in the Cold War to an unofficial partner in a globalised economy.

Statement on Australia's one-China policy

17 January 2025

'Australia has a one-China policy, as distinct from China's one-China principle. Australia's one-China policy is bipartisan and longstanding and has not changed. It is contained within the 1972 Joint Communiqué concerning the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Australia and China.'[18]

—Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, correcting an opinion piece by the PRC Ambassador in the *Australian Financial Review* on 13 January 2025 (see Appendix 2 for the text of the 1972 joint communiqué).[19]

Australia's one-China policy

The complex dynamics of the Australia–PRC and Australia–ROC relationships are defined and shaped by Australia's 'one-China policy'. While formal diplomatic recognition of the ROC is withheld due to Australia's recognition of the PRC, a substantial and growing unofficial relationship thrives across strategic, economic and societal dimensions.

Australia officially recognised the ROC, then based in Taiwan, until 1972. In that year, the Whitlam government established diplomatic relations with the PRC, acknowledging but not accepting Beijing's position that Taiwan is a province of the PRC. That move led to the cessation of official diplomatic ties with the ROC.

Despite the lack of formal recognition, unofficial relations with the ROC have continued to grow as Taiwan has become prosperous.[20] In 1973, Taiwan Travel Services and the Australia – Free China Society were established to operate as a substitute consular service between the ROC and Australia. Trade between Australia and the ROC was under private arrangements. The Far East Trading Co. Pty Ltd was first established in Melbourne in 1973 and later expanded to Sydney in 1981. In 1981, Australia established the Australian Commerce and Industry Office (later renamed the Australian Office in Taipei) in Taiwan, functioning as a *de facto* embassy for trade, tourism and visa services. Similarly, the ROC established its Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Australia in 1991, following an earlier Taiwan Marketing Service office established in 1988.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a strengthening of unofficial ties, partly due to the ROC's democratisation after the lifting of martial law in 1987, which was accompanied by a wave of Taiwanese migration to Australia. The ROC's flexible diplomacy policy during that period focused on building substantive, informal relations, leading to agreements on direct air links, fishing access, and the protection of Taiwanese investments in Australia.

Australia's current relationship with the ROC

Economic and trade elements of the Australia–ROC relationship

The economic relationship between Australia and the ROC is robust and highly complementary:

- *Trade volume:* The ROC was Australia's 12th largest two-way goods and services trading partner in 2023, with trade valued at A$33.6 billion. It was Australia's seventh-largest goods and services export market, worth A$23.5 billion in 2023.
- *Key exports:* Australia is a long-term, reliable supplier of energy, resources, food and services to the ROC. Major merchandise exports include coal, natural gas, iron ore, copper and beef. The ROC is also a significant customer for Australian agricultural products, including dairy products, wheat and sugar.
- *Key imports:* The ROC's main exports to Australia include refined petroleum, broadcasting equipment and semiconductors. The ROC's world-leading semiconductor industry, which is dependent on Australian critical minerals and rare earths, presents significant opportunities for joint ventures and supply-chain resilience.
- *Investment:* In 2023, the ROC's total stock of investment in Australia was valued at A$18.3 billion, while Australia's investment in the ROC was worth A$22.9 billion. Investment interests have expanded beyond traditional minerals and resources to include biomedicine, renewable energy, the circular economy, energy storage and financial services.
- *Trade agreements:* Despite their strong trade ties, Australia and the ROC don't have a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) or shared membership in a regional multilateral FTA, such as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). The ROC has sought Australia's support for CPTPP membership.
- *Bilateral consultations:* Annual bilateral economic consultations are held between Australian and Taiwanese officials, covering market access, investment and agriculture. Joint energy and minerals, trade and investment cooperation consultations and an Agricultural Working Group meeting also take place.

Societal elements of the Australia–ROC relationship

People-to-people links form a vital component of the Australia–ROC relationship:

- *Education:* Australia is the ROC's fourth most popular destination for overseas study; nearly 10,000 Taiwanese students were studying in Australia in 2023. Programs such as the New Colombo Plan also support Australian undergraduates undertaking study and work experience in the ROC.
- *Tourism and working holidays:* The ROC remains a major tourism market for Australia, and a popular mutual working holidaymaker arrangement facilitates cultural exchange and travel between the two. In 2023, more than 14,000 young Taiwanese were granted working holiday visas for Australia.
- *Cultural exchange:* Growing contacts exist in the arts, science and sport, fostering deeper understanding and connections between the two societies, including indigenous Taiwanese and Australian artistic and cultural collaborations.
- *Taiwanese communities in Australia:* There are vibrant Taiwanese communities in Australia, with concentrations in major cities including Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. The 2016 Census recorded more than 46,000 Taiwan-born people in Australia, of whom a significant proportion have arrived since 2006. According to the 2021 Census, there were 49,511 people in Australia who were born in Taiwan. Of those, 55.3% were Australian citizens, while 44.4% weren't Australian citizens. The Department of Home Affairs notes that half of the Taiwan-born population arrived from 2006 onwards, indicating a more recent wave of migration. Various community organisations, chambers of commerce and cultural foundations promote Taiwanese culture and connections within Australia.

While the Census provides a snapshot of the Australian citizen and non-citizen breakdown for the Taiwan-born residents, precise, up-to-date figures for permanent residents and temporary migrants specifically from the ROC can be more challenging to isolate from publicly available data. However, we can infer some details:

- *Australian citizens:* As seen from the Census data, a significant proportion of Taiwan-born individuals in Australia have become Australian citizens. In 2021, that proportion was over half (55.3%). This indicates well-established communities with many individuals having settled for the long term.
- *Permanent residents:* The 'not an Australian citizen' category in the Census primarily comprises permanent residents and temporary migrants. Australia's permanent migration program is the main pathway to permanent residence, including skill stream and family stream visas.[21] Many Taiwan-born individuals would have entered Australia under those streams over the years, including through the Business Migration Program in the 1980s and as skilled migrants since then.[22]
  - While specific current numbers for Taiwanese permanent residents aren't readily published in isolation by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) or the Home Affairs Department, the overall overseas-born population data suggests a continuous intake of migrants, including from the ROC. For instance, the ABS estimated 59,250 people born in Taiwan living in Australia in 2019, which would largely encompass citizens and permanent residents.
- *Temporary migrants:* This category includes students, working holidaymakers and other temporary visa holders.
  - *Students*: Australia is a popular destination for Taiwanese students. As of 2023, nearly 10,000 Taiwanese students were studying in Australia.[23]
  - *Working holidaymakers*: The working holidaymaker program is another significant pathway for temporary migration from the ROC. In August 2021, the ROC was listed as the second-largest country of birth for working holidaymakers in Australia, with 3,600 individuals.[24] In 2023, more than 14,000 young Taiwanese were granted working holiday visas for Australia.[25] This shows a substantial and active flow of temporary migrants.

Australian interests in the Taiwan Strait

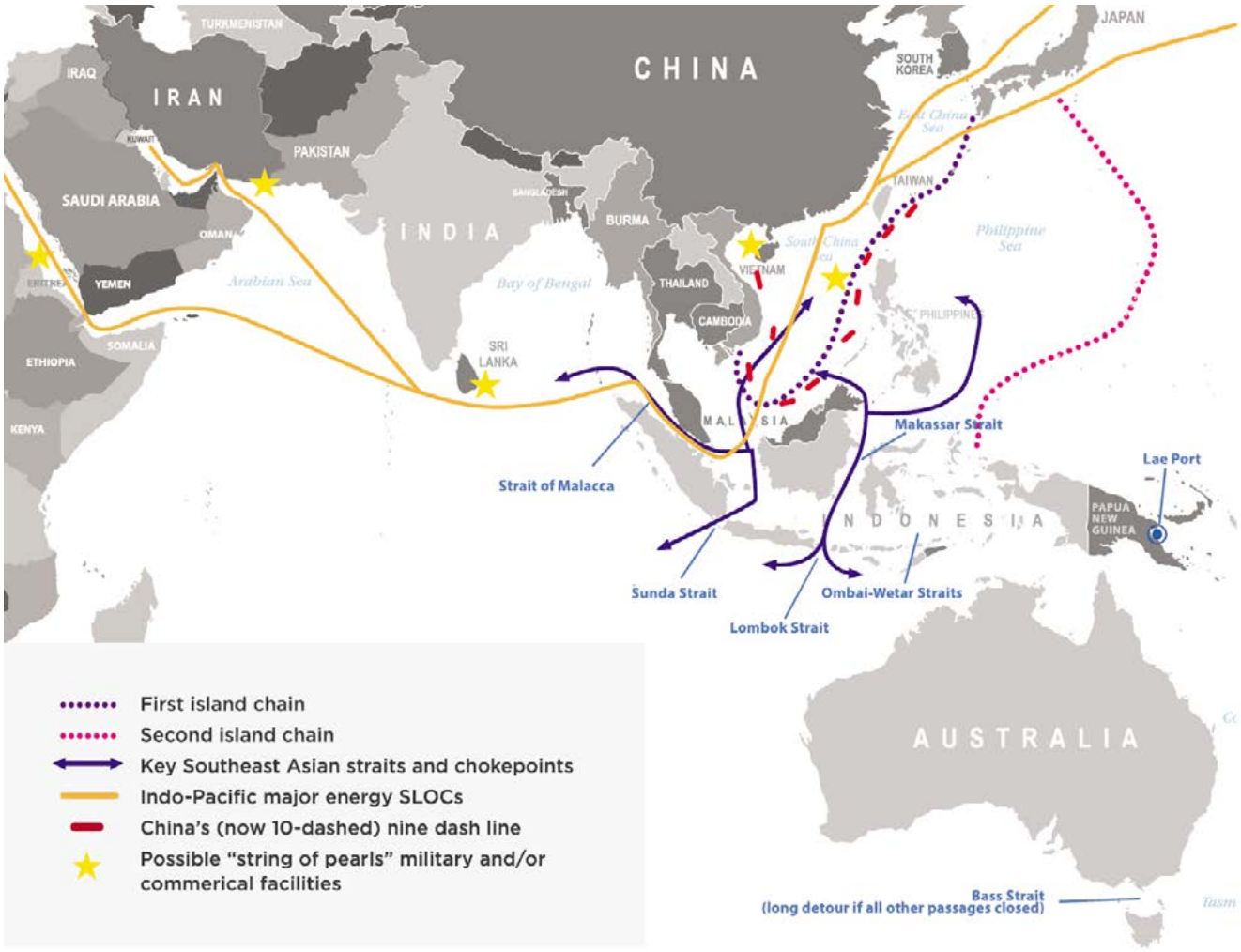
North Asia is the site of Australia's dominant trade relationships, particularly with the PRC, Japan and South Korea. The relationship is characterised by the exchange of key primary resources from Australia for manufactured goods from North Asia.

A significant portion of Australia's iron ore exports to the PRC, which is Australia's largest trading partner, must pass through the Taiwan Strait to reach the PRC's heavily industrialised northern provinces. Approximately 85% of ore carriers sailing from Australia through the Taiwan Strait to the PRC depart from Port Hedland.

According to a report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, nearly 27% of Australia's exports passed through the Taiwan Strait in 2022, totalling almost US$109 billion. The report notes that commodities such as iron ore, coal and liquefied natural gas (LNG) made up approximately 83% of that trade.[26]

World trade is equally dependent on the Taiwan Strait. It's estimated that almost half the world's container ships passed through the Taiwan Strait in the first seven months of 2022 (Figure 3).[27]

Figure 3: Maritime traffic through the Taiwan Strait



Source: S Nagy, *Taiwan and the Indo-Pacific: defending a global public good*, MacDonald-Laurier Institute, 2022, online.

A potential crisis in the Taiwan Strait, ranging from a hybrid conflict, a cyberattack or a blockade to full-scale armed conflict, would have profound and multifaceted strategic, economic and societal impacts on Australia. Australia's deep integration into the Indo-Pacific economic and security architecture, coupled with its reliance on key trade routes and alliances, makes it highly vulnerable to such an event.

A crisis in the Taiwan Strait represents arguably the most significant geopolitical and geoeconomic risk to Australia's future prosperity and security, irrespective of any particular response that may ultimately be adopted by Australia. The interconnectedness of global supply chains, Australia's deep trade dependencies in North Asia, and its alliance commitments mean that the strategic, economic and societal reverberations would be immense, far-reaching and profoundly challenging. Australia would face immense pressure to balance its economic interests with its strategic alignment, while navigating significant domestic societal impacts.

Strategic interests

ANZUS Treaty: A major strategic impact revolves around Australia's obligations under the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS). While Australia maintains a 'one-China policy', it also seeks to maintain (and oppose any unilateral change in) the *status quo* arrangements, arguing for the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. If the US were to consider intervention in any crisis, or should any of the parties to the ANZUS Treaty consider a crisis in the Taiwan Strait to be a threat to the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the parties or the 'Pacific Area', the ANZUS Treaty may be invoked by one or more of the treaty parties, including a request for military assistance.

AUKUS and interoperability: The AUKUS partnership with the US and UK further intertwines Australia's strategic interests with those of its allies in maintaining a stable Indo-Pacific. US officials have suggested that Australia's AUKUS submarines could be used to defend Taiwan, indicating an expectation of Australian involvement. Australia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister, Richard Marles, has stated Australia 'could not be a passive bystander' in a Taiwan Strait conflict.

Regional stability: A conflict and/or a permanently unstable ROC would destabilise the entire Indo-Pacific. It would be likely to involve Japan, South Korea and the Philippines, which are key US allies and major trading partners for Australia, potentially leading to a broader regional conflict. That would profoundly alter the regional security landscape and potentially lead to a new, more militarised, PRC-centric order if the US alliance system were undermined.[28]

Loss of US primacy: A decisive defeat for the US in a Taiwan conflict, or regional indifference to PRC aggression in the Taiwan Strait, could lead to a retraction of US influence in the Indo-Pacific, leaving Australia strategically isolated and without its primary security guarantor. That could force Australia to rethink its entire defence posture and potentially lead to a significant concession of control over Southeast Asia and the South Pacific to the PRC.[29]

Increased regional militarisation: A crisis would be likely to accelerate military build-ups across the region, potentially including Japan and South Korea pursuing more robust or even nuclear capabilities, further escalating tensions.

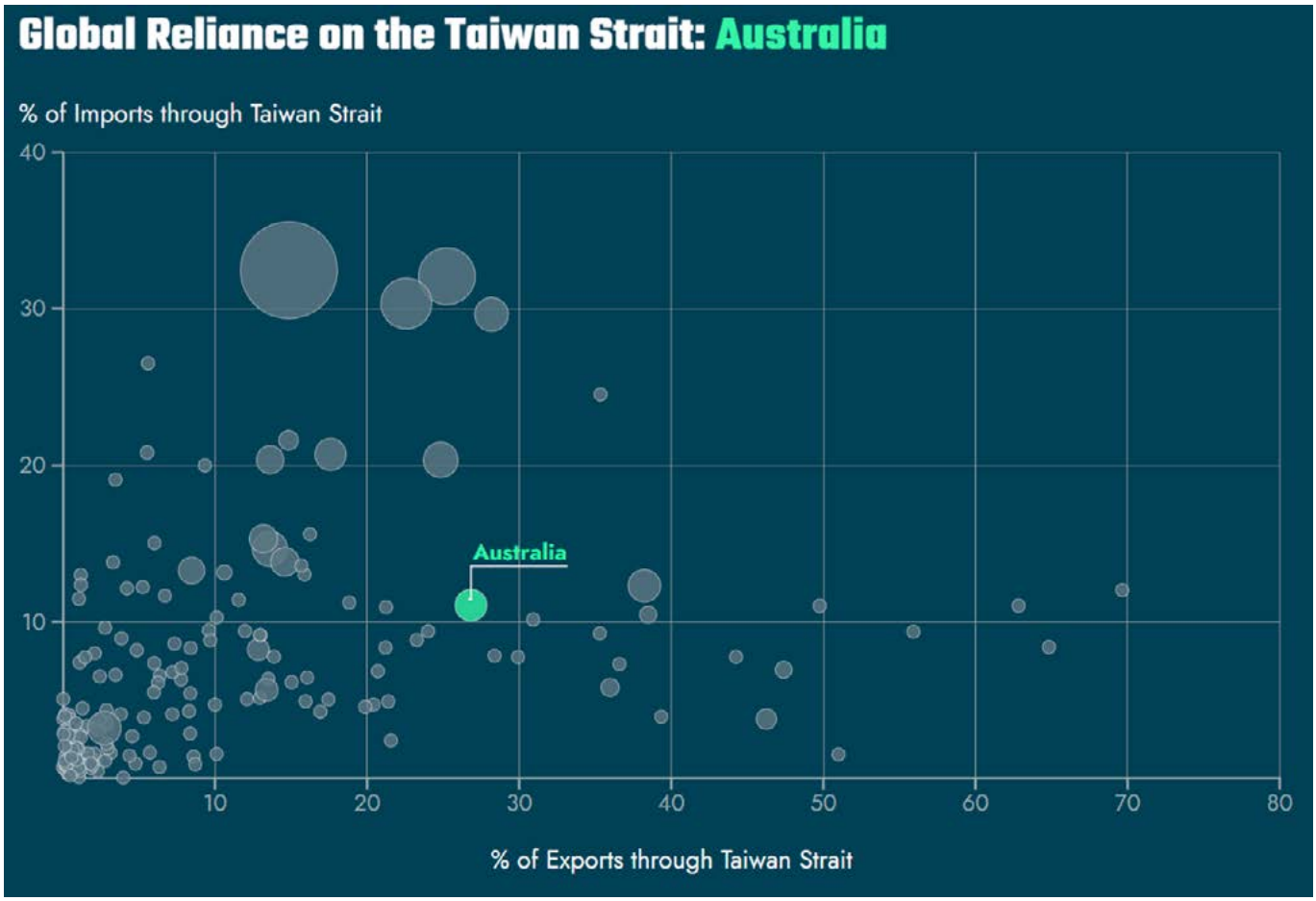
Economic interests

Reliance on PRC trade: The PRC is Australia's largest trading partner. A serious Chinese economic downturn, which a war over Taiwan would be likely to trigger, 'would almost certainly trigger a recession [in Australia]'.[30] Australia's substantial trade surplus with the PRC, driven by iron ore, coal and LNG, would be severely impacted.

Critical sea lines of communication: Nearly 27% of Australia's exports, totalling almost A$109 billion in 2022, passed through the Taiwan Strait. That included a vast majority of iron ore from Port Hedland destined for northern Chinese steel production. Any disruption (blockade, conflict) would force costly and time-consuming rerouting, if trade were even possible. Shipping companies would be likely to avoid the area, leading to spikes in insurance premiums and logistical nightmares.

Global supply-chain shock: The ROC is a critical link in global supply chains as the world's leading producer of advanced semiconductors, accounting for over 90% of cutting-edge chips. A disruption to the ROC's semiconductor industry would have catastrophic ripple effects across numerous sectors globally, from consumer electronics and automobiles to military systems, causing trillions of dollars in losses for global GDP. Australia, which is reliant on imported electronics and advanced technology, would face severe shortages and inflated costs (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Australia's imports through the Taiwan Strait



Source: P Matthew, Brian Hart, David Peng, Bonny Lin, Jasper Verschuur, *Crossroads of commerce: how the Taiwan Strait propels the global economy*, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2024, online.

Energy security: While Australia is a major energy exporter, a conflict could disrupt global energy markets, leading to price spikes and potentially affecting Australia's own refined-fuel imports, especially diesel from the PRC and ROC. The broader impact on energy flows to Japan and South Korea, Australia's major LNG and coal customers, would also affect Australian exports.

Investment and financial instability: A conflict would trigger capital flight and destabilise financial markets globally. Investor confidence in the Indo-Pacific would plummet, reducing foreign direct investment into Australia and potentially leading to a significant downturn in asset markets. Sanctions and retaliatory measures could further reduce trade volumes and accelerate the diversification of global supply chains away from the PRC, potentially benefiting other regions but initially causing significant economic pain for Australia.

Societal interests

Standard of living: The economic fallout from a Taiwan crisis, including recession, inflation, job losses and supply-chain disruptions, would directly reduce Australians' standard of living. Reduced trade and economic uncertainty would translate into higher prices for goods, fewer employment opportunities and decreased national wealth.

Cost of living: Supply-chain disruptions would lead to shortages of imported goods and increased costs for everything from electronics to consumer staples, exacerbating existing cost-of-living pressures.

Social cohesion within Australia: A crisis could inflame tensions within Australia's multicultural society, not least among and between the Chinese-Australian and Taiwanese-Australian communities. Concerns about foreign interference and loyalty could be heightened, potentially leading to social friction and discrimination.

Public opinion and alliance burden: Australian public opinion on intervention in a Taiwan conflict is divided. While a majority of Australians in 2021 rated a military conflict between the US and the PRC over the ROC as a critical threat, 57% believed Australia should stay neutral in such a conflict, despite 43% having previously supported military deployment in the clearest case of Chinese invasion. A crisis would force difficult national conversations about Australia's role, its alliance obligations and the acceptable level of risk and sacrifice for its strategic interests, potentially leading to significant public debate and political pressure.

People-to-people links: Travel restrictions, heightened geopolitical tensions and economic downturns would severely reduce people-to-people links, including tourism, education and cultural exchanges. The ROC is a popular destination for Australian students, and a crisis would halt those connections.

Australian sentiment towards crises in the Taiwan Strait

As part of Stage 1 of this project, a detailed sentiment analysis was undertaken to examine how Australian attitudes towards the ROC and cross-strait relations are formed and influenced by both traditional and social media.

This analysis, conducted using Factiva (for traditional media) and Meltwater (for social media), tracked public sentiment over time, within the period from January 2020 to December 2024 (with a few selected news events in 2025). It explored what information relating to the ROC—including the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2022 visit by Nancy Pelosi, multiple Taiwanese elections, parliamentary delegations, and the 2024 inauguration of President Lai Ching-te—was being received by Australian audiences.

That longitudinal approach allowed the project to identify not only shifts in sentiment (positive or negative), but also the media platforms, voices and events that were most influential in shaping Australian public perceptions about the ROC. The analysis also identified possible vectors of foreign interference, mis- and disinformation, and the extent to which Australia's one-China policy has contributed to ambiguity or inconsistency in reporting about the ROC.

The sentiment analysis provided a foundational evidence base to inform subsequent phases of the research, particularly Stage 2's qualitative focus group work. It offered critical insight into the most influential outlets and narratives, and the extent to which traditional and social media shape or distort public understanding of cross-strait dynamics.

Mentions of a 'Taiwan Strait crisis' in the Australian media environment over the past five years have remained consistently low, indicating a limited public or journalistic engagement with the term as a strategic concept or policy concern. Analysis of media databases shows that, with the exception of a brief spike in 2022, annual mentions of the term have remained below 100—an extremely modest volume when compared to coverage of other regional flashpoints such as the South China Sea, AUKUS, or US–PRC tensions more broadly (figures 5 and 6). A more detailed breakdown of the sentiment analysis is in Appendix 3.

Figure 5: Mentions of 'Taiwan' in Australian media, 2020 to 2024

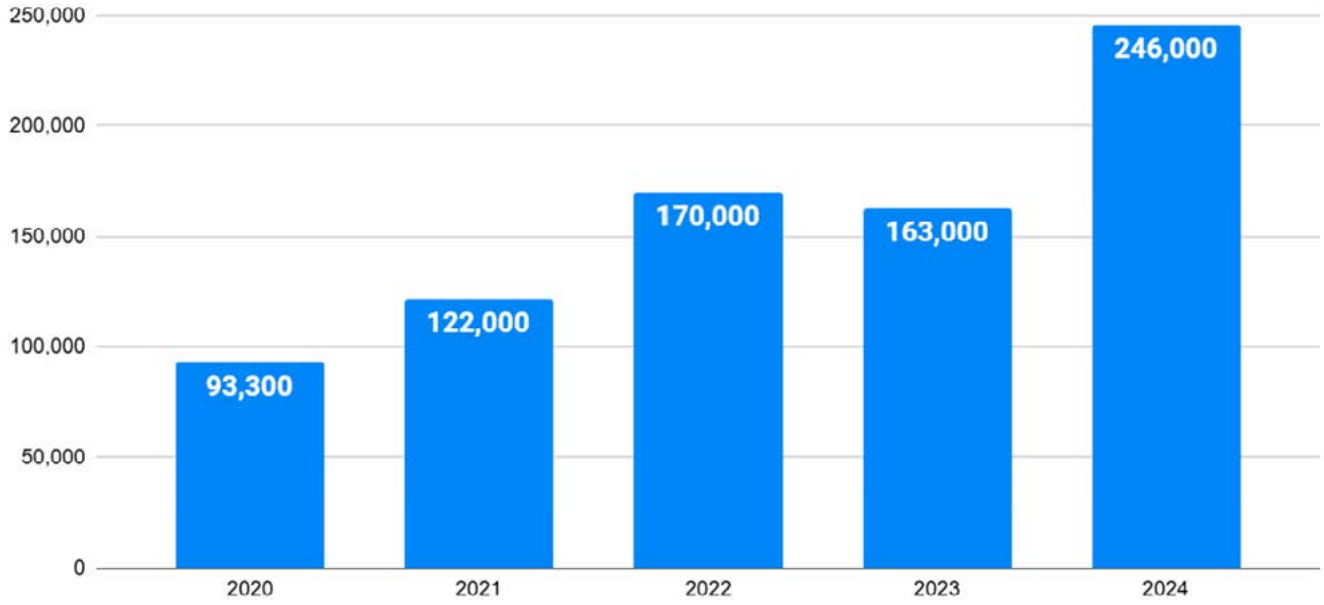
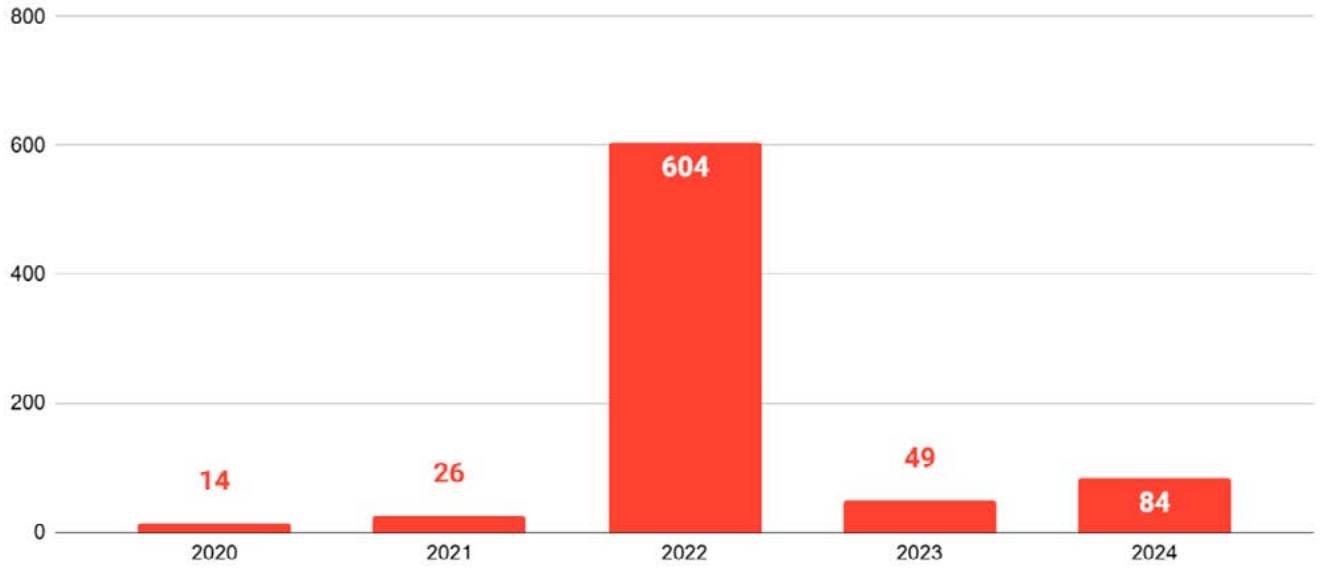


Figure 6: Mentions of 'Taiwan Strait crisis' in Australian media, 2020 to 2024



The most notable uptick across the five-year period occurred in the weeks after August 2022, coinciding with then-US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's high-profile visit to the ROC (figures 7 and 8). That event triggered an aggressive military response from Beijing, including live-fire drills around the island, prompting a short-lived surge in global media attention. Australian outlets reported on those developments largely through the lens of US–PRC rivalry, with only limited analysis of the implications for Australia or regional stability. Even during that period, however, usage of the specific phrase 'Taiwan Strait crisis' remained sporadic and largely confined to international reporting republished in local outlets.

Figure 7: Mentions of 'Taiwan' in Australian media, 1 July to 31 August 2022 (includes Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan)

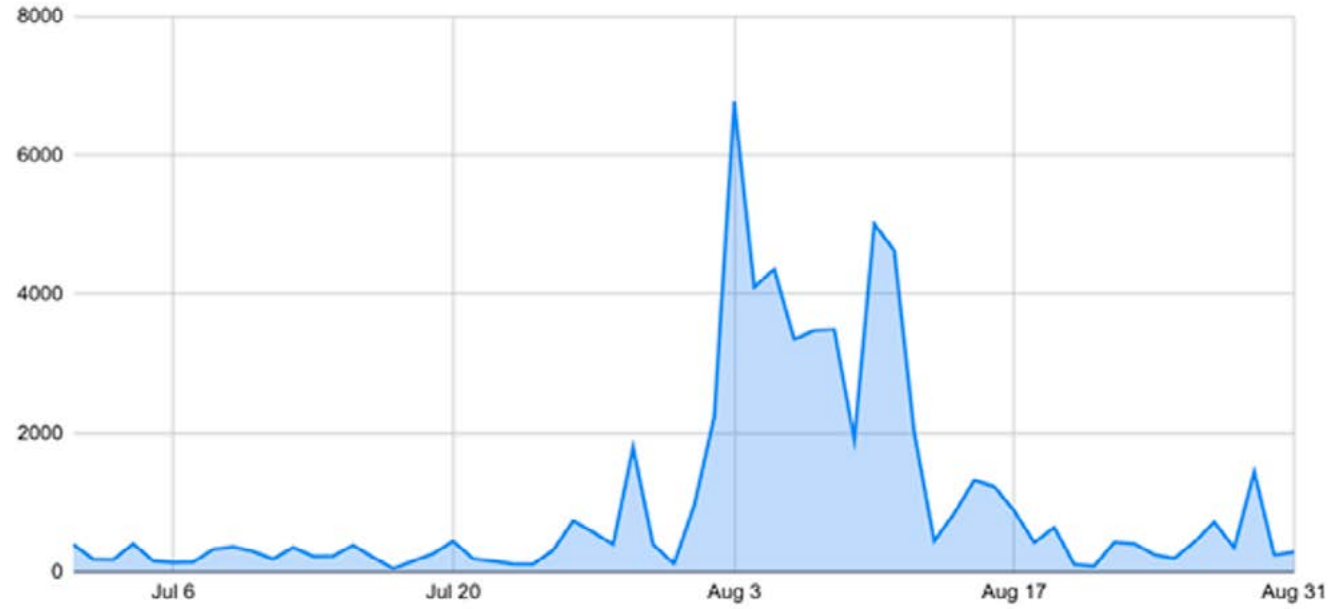
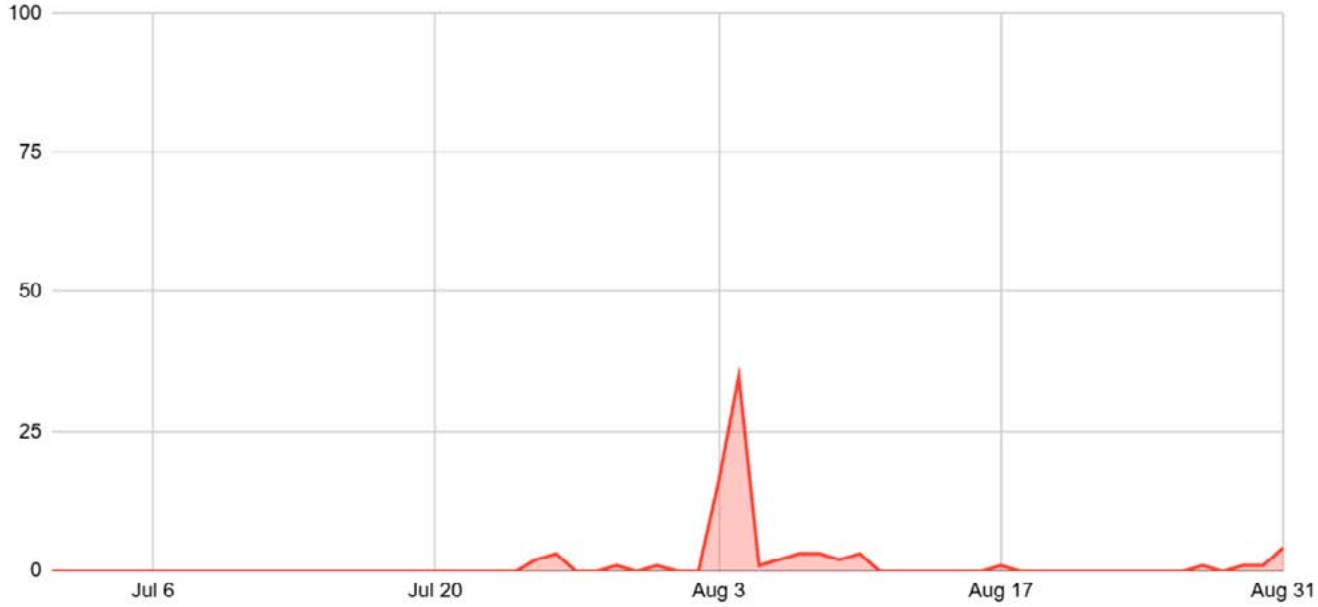


Figure 8: Mentions of 'Taiwan Strait crisis' in Australian media, 1 July to 31 August 2022 (includes Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan)



Outside of such moments of acute geopolitical tension, references to a Taiwan Strait crisis are minimal and highly event-contingent. The term is rarely used in Australian editorial commentary, think-tank output or political discourse.

That finding is consistent with a broader trend: Taiwan isn't consistently framed in Australian media as a standing security issue or as a site of ongoing strategic risk in its own right. Instead, attention is drawn in episodic bursts, often in reaction to external or tangential factors, such as AUKUS and the US–Australia alliance, Chinese military power or Taiwanese elections, rather than through proactive or sustained analysis of cross-strait dynamics (figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9: Mentions of 'Taiwan' in Australian media, 2024

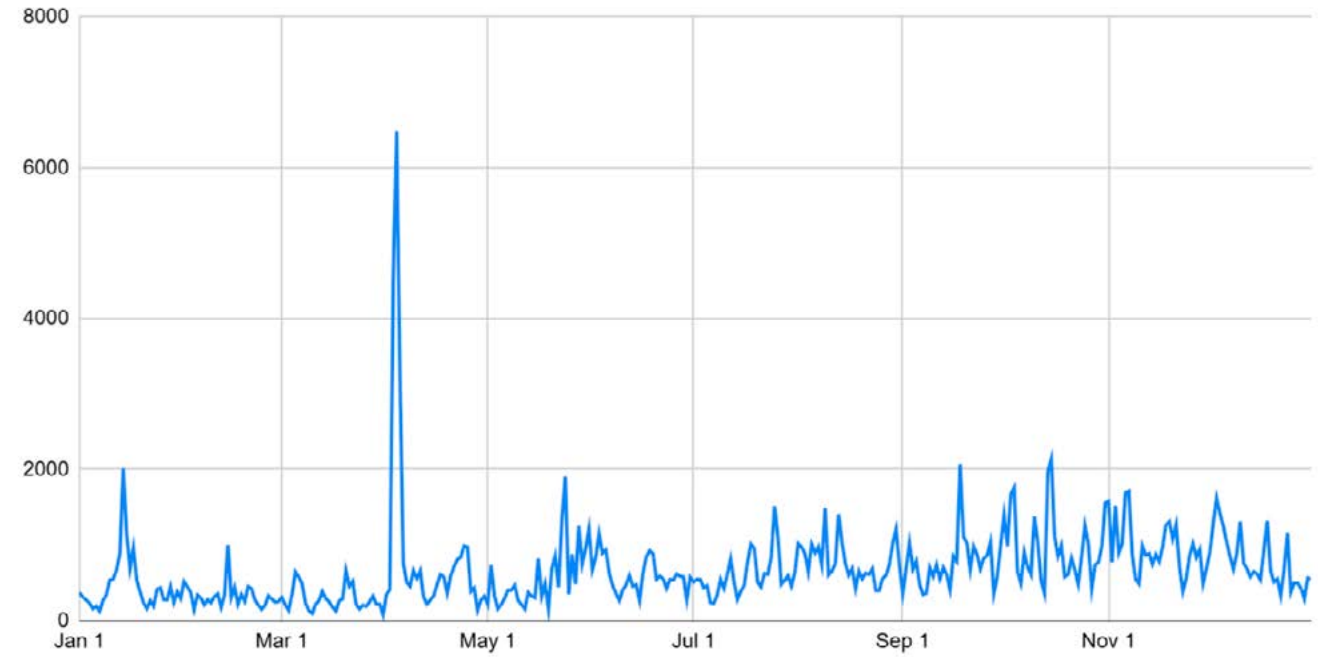
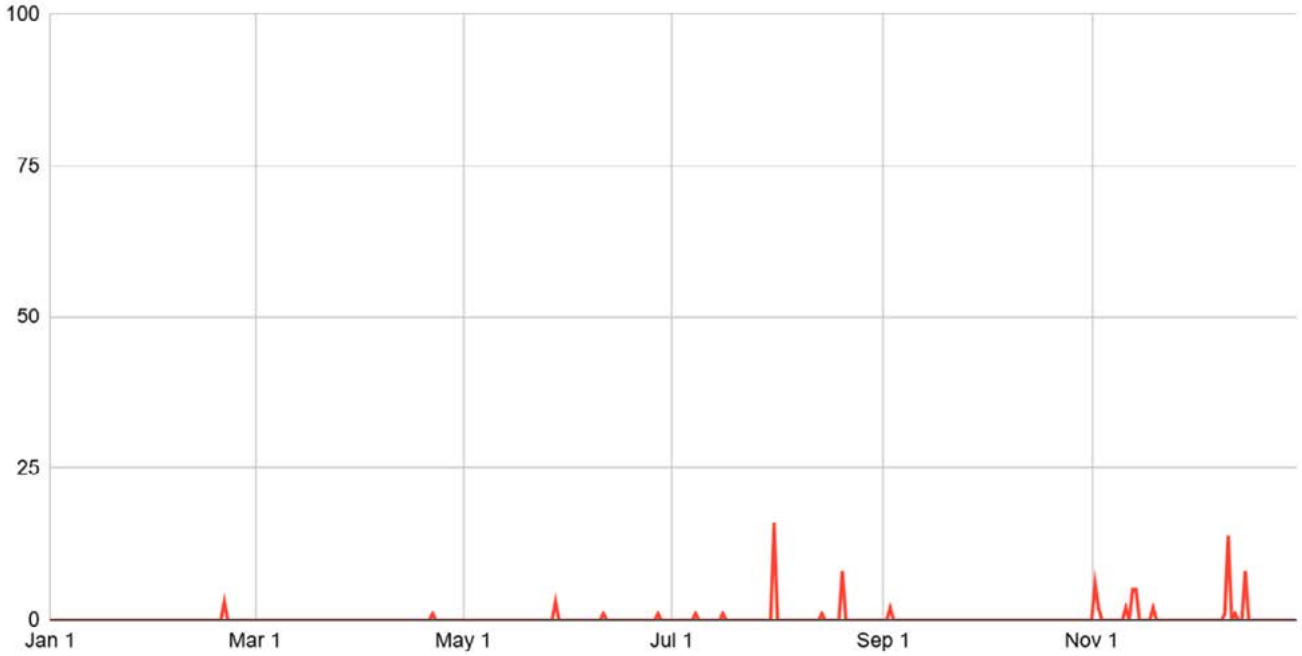


Figure 10: Mentions of 'Taiwan Strait crisis' in Australian media, 2024



The relative absence of 'Taiwan Strait crisis' as a framing device may also reflect deeper informational and conceptual gaps within Australia's media and policy environment. There's limited public understanding of what such a crisis would entail, what its triggers might be, and, critically, how it could affect Australia's interests. The low frequency of mentions aligns with findings elsewhere in this report indicating that Australia's media coverage of the ROC is often both shallow and inconsistent, and shaped more by geopolitical spectacle than strategic reflection.

That underutilisation of crisis framing carries potential risks. It suggests that the Australian public isn't being consistently exposed to the strategic significance of cross-strait tensions, nor to the possibility of conflict escalation. As a result, policymakers may face challenges in building public support for contingency planning, alliance commitments or crisis-response measures in the event of a genuine deterioration in the Taiwan Strait.

In sum, the term 'Taiwan Strait crisis' hasn't meaningfully entered Australian strategic vocabulary or media consciousness. Absent sustained media coverage and public education, it remains a latent issue—underdiscussed, underanalysed and insufficiently integrated into broader debates about Australia's role in regional security.

Insofar as a crisis in the Taiwan Strait is seen through the lens of US–PRC rivalry, public attitudes towards conflict in the strait aren't easily separated from attitudes towards the PRC and the US. Annual Lowy Institute polls point to a major structural shift in Australian attitudes towards the PRC underway since 2018, and levels of trust in the PRC to behave responsibly in the world fell 40 points, from 52% to 12%, in 2022. Threat perceptions grew fivefold over that period, from 12% of respondents regarding the PRC more a security threat than economic partner in 2018 to 63% judging it more of a security threat in 2022.[31] The proportion of respondents who thought the PRC likely to present a military threat to Australia in the next 20 years rose from 45% to 75%.[32]

Trust in the US has fallen over the same period, but that hasn't been matched by souring sentiment towards Australia's US alliance. In the first poll conducted in the wake of Donald Trump's election to a second term as US President, conducted in 2025, trust in the US to act responsibly in the world fell 20 points year on year to 36%, far below its historic high of 83% in 2011.[33] Nevertheless, in 2025, eight in 10 (80%) Australians considered the alliance important for Australia's security.

Relative perceptions of the ROC shifted, too. In 2018, Australians viewed the PRC and ROC with similar warmth, but, by 2022, there was a significant shift, with the ROC registering a very warm 64° and the PRC a cool 33° on the Lowy Institute's feelings thermometer.[34]

From around 2022, public perceptions of possible threats to Australia's interests arising from military conflict over Taiwan rose to match other top threats identified in earlier surveys, including climate change, cyberattacks and Covid-19. By 2022, Australians were less inclined (51%) to remain neutral in any conflict between the US and the PRC than in the preceding year (57%). A slim majority (51%) favoured deploying the Australian military 'if China invaded Taiwan and the United States decided to intervene'. Majority support for deploying Australia's armed forces increased by eight points between 2019 and 2022. Concern over the ROC accelerated further in 2023, when close to two in three Australians (64%) saw the prospect of a military conflict over Taiwan involving the US and the PRC as a critical threat—almost twice as many as in 2020 (35%). Australians were also increasingly alert to the consequences for themselves of any conflict over Taiwan involving the US. In 2024, more than six in 10 (63%) Australians said the US made Australia safer from attack or pressure from the PRC, although 75% believed the alliance made it more likely Australia will be drawn into a war in Asia.[35]

Australian policy parameters and impacts

Through the activities of this project, we conclude that, across Australia, the overall state of understanding of Australia's policy parameters around potential crises in the Taiwan Strait and the impacts of potential crises is one of limited knowledge punctuated by outlying organisations and individuals who are very well informed. Knowledge of and opinion on a Taiwan Strait crisis in Australia are, as a result, complex, varied and structured, but also delimited. Different sectors within the Australian polity have different levels of knowledge of Australia's policy position, shaped by both instrumental needs and capacity constraints, but not by vested interests or influence. Values, such as a commitment to democracy, aren't a major driver of knowledge, understanding and opinion.

Stakeholders predominantly look to Canberra for authoritative guidance to lead them on this issue in both understanding events and knowing how to respond. That results in institutional and individual responses that are most likely to be reactive to a crisis. Most believe Australia has a role to play but are also realistic about what that role would be. Across focus groups and public commentary, there has been a consistent expectation that the Australian Government, rather than media or other institutions, should take the lead in both explaining what's happening in a crisis and shaping the national response.

In the Australian system, there's no definition of a Taiwan 'crisis' that presents a threshold that could be recognised as triggering institutional or individual responses. Some respondents believed a crisis was already ongoing, while others had higher thresholds for crisis. There was no substantive understanding in any sector of the basis in history for a Taiwan Strait crisis and therefore there was limited organisational capacity among respondents to develop and calibrate assessments, including a crisis definition. A Taiwan Strait crisis is treated as a black swan event or akin to a natural disaster that has severe consequences, can be prepared for, but is ultimately unknowable and unpredictable.

On that basis, estimates of the timing of possible conflict in the Taiwan Strait varied among and between sectors, though there was general agreement that the likelihood of conflict increased with instability in international relations more broadly. One interviewee said the price of gold was a fair proxy for global instability and for the likelihood of a Taiwan Strait crisis. Another advised that no crisis was likely in the next five years. Several suggested that the Australian Government wasn't being honest with the Australian public about the risks and consequences of conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

A majority of participants ascribed responsibility for a future Taiwan Strait crisis to Beijing, while a minority, mostly in the university sector, equivocated on responsibility between Beijing and Washington. For many, the PRC's increasingly assertive actions were already perceived as provocative and destabilising. There was an overall consensus that peace and security in the Taiwan Strait is a collective responsibility for all regional and global powers.

There's a general awareness that a Taiwan Strait crisis at the level of war would be a whole-of-nation crisis for Australia because of the economic and trade effects, with no assumption that Australia could avoid any impact. The potentially catastrophic consequences of such a crisis aren't front of mind for most Australians. When prompted, participants were generally able to recognise the seriousness of such a scenario and articulate concerns about the potential local, regional and global implications. There's a noticeable lack of proactive engagement with the issue, but a latent awareness that, if a crisis were to erupt, it would be deeply consequential for Australia.

The level of understanding of the strategic importance of the Taiwan Strait as both a trade route and as a geopolitical fulcrum point for the Indo-Pacific region isn't consistent across Australia. While there's a nascent understanding of some of the challenges, especially around supply chains, there's no real appreciation of the impact that any change to the *status quo* may have on the region, and on Australia's security and prosperity. The project did note some regional variance in levels of understanding, though additional work would be required to fully assess the causes of such variance.

Participants generally believed that Australia would inevitably be drawn into the fallout of a Taiwan Strait conflict in some capacity, although they were realistic about the limits of Australia's influence. While there was broad consensus that the PRC was primarily responsible for rising tensions, that didn't always translate into strong views on what Australia should do, beyond expressing support for peace and stability.

Despite the ROC's strategic importance, its history and political developments are underrepresented in academic curriculums and research. That marginalisation undermines Australia's ability to fully understand the ROC's role in regional security and limits opportunities for academic and student communities to engage with critical issues related to the ROC. Taiwan-related scholarship can be subjected to external pressures, including interference from foreign governments, which could stifle academic freedom. Similarly, in public, media and policy discourse, the absence of substantive understanding allows a range of unexamined assumptions about the nature of the PRC–ROC relationship and Australian policy towards the Taiwan Strait to prevail.

Key among those assumptions is that Taiwan's circumstances are a proxy for US power in the region and therefore that a Taiwan Strait crisis is an Australia–US alliance issue, above economic, community or values considerations. In the context of US defence commitments to Taiwan, that assumption draws Taiwan discourse readily into a broader debate about the alliance, defence commitments and spending, including AUKUS, and tends to act as a trigger for the divisive politics of Australia's relations with the US and with the PRC.

In addition, media and public-policy discourse in Australia often normalises Beijing's position and actions towards the ROC, including its territorial claims, military threats and efforts to isolate the ROC diplomatically. The common assumption that the ROC's exclusion from the international system is a requirement for regional security, for example, can deny the ROC due recognition as an entity with legitimate interests in the global commons. Similarly, the claim that routine Australian parliamentary visits, ministerial statements or institutional exchanges with the ROC threaten regional security or undermine Australia's relations with the PRC creates confusion about Australia's one-China policy, which, in fact, encourages those kinds of ties with the ROC.

The problem is amplified through efforts by Beijing to normalise its 'one-China principle' in Australian public discourse and policy practices, such as PRC Ambassador Xiao's 13 January 2025 *Australian Financial Review* opinion article.[36] Australia's one-China policy, under which it established diplomatic recognition of the PRC, deploys ambiguous language on Beijing's territorial claim over Taiwan through the distinction between the words *recognise* and *acknowledge*. Mediating Taiwan discourse through the PRC's perspective can normalise Beijing's one-China principle, which holds that Taiwan is a province of the PRC.

Perceptions of cross-strait relations within Australian stakeholder groups

Australians primarily view the potential for crises in the Taiwan Strait through the lens of regional security, although few recognise the far-reaching implications of any crisis. Public perception is influenced to a moderate degree by the media and government discourse, which often compares the crisis to the Ukraine–Russia conflict.

The ROC's critical role in global semiconductor production and its economic ties with Australia make any crisis involving it a unique challenge for Australia. The ROC's importance extends beyond the military sphere and affects Australia's strategic stability, economic security and social cohesion. Overall, interviewees felt Australia had a stake in preserving the US-led postwar order in the region, and in upholding democracy and the rule of law in coordination with allies and partners. All sectors reported growing and intensifying links with the ROC in business, media, education and people-to-people ties, with little corresponding downside in their relations with the PRC.

Due to the unpredictable nature of the potential crisis, Australian public institutions tend to adopt a reactive stance, responding only after visible damage occurs, similarly to the approach taken in natural-disaster management. That reactive tendency can impede proactive and forward-thinking strategic planning, leaving Australia vulnerable in the event of a crisis.

Outside the business sector, however, there appears to be little appreciation of the potential impact of the breakdown of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait on Australia's way of life and the wellbeing of its citizens, beyond the question of democracy and the rule of law. There's little understanding of the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific for Australia's wellbeing as a trading nation.

State, territory and municipal governments

There's limited Taiwan-specific policy capacity or institutional knowledge at the state and territory government level in Australia. In general, state governments don't have dedicated mechanisms for tracking developments in cross-strait relations or assessing the potential implications of a Taiwan Strait crisis. As a result, their understanding of the issue tends to be shallow and event-driven, with limited strategic foresight or planning.

In the event of a crisis, state governments overwhelmingly indicated that they would look to the federal government for leadership and coordination. There was little sense of a proactive or independent role at the subnational level, and most states saw themselves as responders rather than stakeholders in shaping Australia's broader approach to Taiwan-related contingencies. That passivity extended to public communication responsibilities: state actors expect Canberra to take the lead in informing the public and articulating Australia's position.

Some exceptions were noted at the local government level, where select councils—particularly those with more established Taiwanese-Australian communities—demonstrated a better grasp of Taiwan-related issues. Those councils often engage directly with diaspora groups through cultural, economic or sister-city relationships, which in turn foster a more immediate awareness of developments in the ROC. Similarly, there were instances at the state government level of awareness of specific implications to local economies from a Taiwan Strait crisis through supply chains. However, such engagement remains highly localised and doesn't typically translate into policy input or broader state-level coordination. Furthermore, local understanding of a Taiwan Strait crisis doesn't have ready mechanisms to move up through Australia's system to the national level.

Overall, there's a clear institutional gap in Taiwan literacy across Australian states and territories, reinforcing the centrality of federal government leadership in any potential response.

University sector

Universities are outliers in their limited capacity to understand and articulate a Taiwan Strait crisis and its implications for their own operations. Their views lean towards equivocation and lack clarity, and they have limited if any specific preparation in place for a crisis and aren't able to define the parameters of a crisis or its implications for the sector. Universities have very little exposure to the ROC international student market, as there are few Taiwanese students on their campuses, compared to other cohorts, and they lack mechanisms to identify those who are enrolled.

There are implicit politics in how universities engage with the ROC and examples of universities marginalising or failing to support ROC engagement activity by staff and students. Nevertheless, protest action and campus activism in recent years have led to institutional learning and a meaningful but general debate about freedom of speech and activism on campus that may inform future university responses in the event of a crisis.

Exposure to Taiwan within Australian academia remains limited when compared to the scale and depth of institutional engagement with the PRC. While there are isolated cases of scholars and research centres focusing on Taiwan—particularly in the fields of politics, international relations and regional studies—those remain the exception rather than the norm. Most universities don't offer dedicated Taiwan studies programs, and Taiwan is rarely treated as a subject of sustained inquiry in broader Indo-Pacific or even China-related curriculums.

That imbalance is largely a result of longstanding structural and funding asymmetries. Decades of investment in the PRC international student market, Confucius Institutes and joint research projects with mainland Chinese institutions have produced a deep PRC-facing ecosystem. The ROC, by contrast, has received comparatively little institutional support, resulting in significant gaps in both teaching and research capacity. Even among students and staff in relevant disciplines, basic knowledge of the ROC's political system, society and security environment is often minimal.

Nonetheless, there are signs of modest growth in interest in cognate disciplines, such as security studies and international relations. Heightened geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific and increased public attention to cross-strait issues have prompted some academics and institutions to take a closer look at the ROC. Research collaborations, student exchanges and public lectures have begun to emerge in the context of the regional security outlook, although those rely on the initiative of individual scholars rather than any institutional strategy.

Importantly, discussions on Australian campuses about how a Taiwan Strait crisis might unfold are often shaped by analogies to recent global events. The Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, provided a real-time example of how geopolitical tensions and global supply-chain disruptions can affect university operations, student mobility and public discourse. Similarly, the ongoing Israel–Gaza conflict has raised awareness of how distant conflicts can reverberate on Australian campuses through protests, diplomatic sensitivities and pressures on academic freedom. Those analogies are increasingly informing how university administrators and academic staff think about a potential Taiwan Strait contingency, even if few have taken formal steps to prepare for such a scenario.

Industry sector

The Australian industrial sector's perceptions of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait are mixed. Many industrial concerns aren't willing to be publicly vocal on the matter, shaped by their deep dependence on Chinese trade and nervousness over the impact on their PRC relationship of public commentary or discussion of Taiwan. Many have absorbed the lessons from PRC pressures on other companies, including:

- the 2018 demands from the PRC's Civil Aviation Administration to dozens of international airlines that they change their website listings to show Taiwan as part of the PRC
- the Chinese pressure on Marriott International to temporarily shut down its Chinese website and app after it listed Tibet, Hong Kong, Macau and the ROC as separate countries in a customer questionnaire and social-media posts
- companies such as Gap, Zara and Mercedes-Benz being forced to apologise for depicting the ROC on their websites or in marketing materials in a way that didn't align with Beijing's view.

Some Australian companies, speaking confidentially, advised that threats have been made against their PRC trade activities should they engage in trade delegations to the ROC.

Notwithstanding that nervousness to speak publicly, some industry sectors are deeply aware of the potential for a crisis in the Taiwan Strait and its catastrophic economic implications. For those sectors, particularly those engaged in international banking and financial activities, perceptions are shaped by a combination of factors, including direct trade dependencies, the potential for global economic disruption and the broader geopolitical landscape.

For companies in some industrial sectors, a crisis in the Taiwan Strait is perceived to be economically devastating. Those companies recognise that a crisis wouldn't just disrupt regional stability but could trigger a global recession, with severe consequences for Australia's economy and standard of living.

The PRC is Australia's largest two-way trading partner. A conflict that puts the Chinese economy into freefall or significantly disrupts trade would almost certainly trigger a recession in Australia. This is a major concern for Australian industries, especially those in the resources and agriculture sectors, as much of their exports to the PRC pass through the Taiwan Strait. Uninsurable shipping was one issue raised by respondents.

Such companies also recognise that they're reliant on the ROC for a range of imports, including refined petroleum, telecommunications equipment, semiconductors and computers. A conflict would severely disrupt the supply of critical components such as semiconductors, for which the ROC is the world's leading producer of the most advanced chips. That would have a ripple effect on numerous Australian industries, from electronics to defence.

Many Australian companies are uncertain about official Australian policy on the ROC issue. As a consequence, they express considerable confusion about whether business involvement with the ROC is 'in the national interest', and whether Australian governments would provide consular services and other official support to their businesses. That reticence to engage with the ROC economically is also underpinned by a concern that engagement would anger Beijing, resulting in a hesitancy to pursue deeper opportunities with Taipei.

Some investors and companies report that they're becoming more sophisticated in their understanding of ROC-related risks. They've begun to factor in and plan for potential disruptions, even if those disruptions fall short of a full-scale crisis. They also report a growing incentive for businesses to accelerate their diversification efforts and reduce their reliance on the PRC, especially in the event of a regional confrontation.

Community sector

Australian community perceptions of cross–Taiwan Strait relations are shaped by a complex mix of concern over a potential conflict, an emerging recognition of, and sense of solidarity with, the ROC as a democracy, and a desire to avoid direct military involvement. That nuanced public perception has evolved with the rising geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific.

Polling suggests that Australians are highly concerned about a potential military conflict over Taiwan.[37] That fear is often linked to the potential for a regional conflict that could draw Australia in, particularly through its alliance with the US. While the prospect of direct military intervention is unpopular, Australians support non-military responses to a Chinese invasion of the ROC. A 2023 Lowy Institute poll found that strong majorities would support:

- accepting Taiwanese refugees (80%)
- imposing economic and diplomatic sanctions on the PRC (76%)
- sending arms and military supplies to the ROC (64%).[38]

The idea of sending Australian military personnel to help defend Taiwan is the only option that doesn't have majority support among Australians. The 2023 Lowy Institute poll showed that only 42% would support that action, while 56% would oppose it. The Australian public generally supports the ROC's right to self-determination. A 2022 survey found that 70% of Australians and 68% of Taiwanese believe that the ROC should become an independent country if it can maintain peaceful relations with the PRC.[39]

Risk management within Australian stakeholder groups

Across government and industry, there are a few stand-out examples of planning for the risks of a contingency across the Taiwan Strait, and relatively robust plans appear to be prepared. However, a concerning number of Australian organisations don't think about the risks, are unaware of the vulnerabilities and aren't planning for potential fallout from any contingency. That creates a significant vulnerability—particularly in Australian supply chains—that would mean any potential contingency may have a catastrophic effect on the Australian economy, society and individual organisations.

The overall impression is one of cultivated naivete or benign indifference to the consequences of a Taiwan Strait crisis ('It's not my problem.'). Across all sectors, there are outliers in which motivated individuals and organisations have developed excellent and robust links to the ROC, have good community knowledge and have the tools to be able to understand the local effects of a Taiwan Strait crisis in detail.

No sector or institution is systematically planning or preparing for a Taiwan Strait crisis, beyond generic operational or liability precautions that can be applied in any crisis. Some government agencies are undertaking risk planning for major conflict, with respect to supply-chain resilience for example, but without the urgency that the current level of risk calls for. Other agencies are preparing to mitigate risks to social cohesion arising from a Taiwan Strait crisis, comparable to the risks exposed in the Gaza crisis, but without the resources or sense of urgency that the risk demands.

Government sector

The Australian Government undertakes regular assessments of the strategic environment at a classified level through the Office of National Intelligence's national assessments, other all-source analytic products and specific intelligence products from other members of the national intelligence community. Significant risks to Australia are considered by the National Security Committee of Cabinet and inform government policy, legislation and programs of activity across the Australian Government. Government strategic policies, based on those assessments and considerations, are publicly released on a regular basis. For example, the 2024 National Defence Strategy states that 'The risk of a crisis or conflict in the Taiwan Strait is increasing, as well as at other flashpoints, including disputes in the South and East China Seas and on the border with India.'[40] The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade also updates its country information regularly and produces specific notifications and alerts when conditions with a region or country may adversely affect Australia's national interests, economic or business conditions or citizen safety and security.[41] Strategic-level scenarios are developed and contingency planning activities are undertaken to prepare government departments and agencies for possible risks.

State and local governments have resilience and disaster-preparedness sections that engage with risk across a range of parameters, including geopolitical risk. They're dependent on specific and top-down channels of communication from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for identifying and responding to a Taiwan Strait crisis. They have limited to no internal capacity to develop their own geopolitical risk assessment and see no need to develop one. State and local governments are reluctant overall to address this issue and, if they do so, it's instrumentalised around state-level economies and supply chains, using good knowledge gained through the Covid-19 pandemic about the local effects of global events, but no knowledge specific to a Taiwan Strait crisis. Interestingly, there are examples of local and state governments in Australia taking a more proactive approach to fostering ties with the ROC through engagement with the Taiwanese diaspora communities, as opposed to the federal government, which remains cautious about engaging due to its broader foreign policy constraints.

Industry and economic risk exposure

While some sectors, such as banking and insurance, have begun to assess the risks posed by the ROC's strategic importance, other industries, particularly those dependent on semiconductor production, have largely remained disengaged or with only functional interest. The ROC's dominance in semiconductor production is indeed a crucial element in global supply chains, and any disruption in that sector would have far-reaching consequences. Specifically, industries in Australia could face significant challenges in areas like disruptive technology and biotechnology.

The small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) community is engaged with the ROC positively, frames the ROC in terms of business opportunities and advocacy, and doesn't foreground the risk to businesses of a Taiwan Strait crisis. The SME community lacks its own capacity to assess, develop and communicate geopolitical risk on the Taiwan Strait despite its exposure to risk, relying on the federal government for advisories and guidance. While the business community is a source of knowledge and expertise about the ROC, including *ad hoc* knowledge of risk, it isn't organising or advocating for preparedness.

However, and in line with instrumental need, large businesses, especially in banking and insurance, have developed detailed and substantive knowledge of the implications of a Taiwan Strait crisis for investments and supply chains through modelling. They have robust corporate processes to assess and respond to a crisis in terms of maintaining the integrity of their businesses.

Australian business engagement with the ROC is often niche, sector-specific and relatively limited in scale compared to engagement with larger regional economies such as the PRC, Japan or South Korea. While there's some interest in expanding economic ties—particularly in areas such as semiconductors, advanced manufacturing, education and green energy—those opportunities remain underexplored and underdeveloped. For many firms, the ROC doesn't yet feature as a significant strategic market, and business relationships tend to be transactional rather than deeply embedded. An earlier role for the ROC as a business stepping stone into the PRC has fallen into abeyance as the PRC market has matured.

Where there's attention to the ROC, it's often shaped by a risk-management lens, particularly among financial institutions, investors and multinational corporations. For those actors, a potential Taiwan Strait crisis is viewed primarily in terms of operational exposure, supply-chain disruptions and market volatility. Banks and insurers monitor geopolitical developments closely, but that tends to be part of broader regional risk assessments rather than tailored contingency planning for a Taiwan Strait–specific scenario. Policy interest and support in Australia for national semiconductor and biotechnology industries is linking with the ROC positively but not scoping crisis risk.

Despite the ROC's central role in global semiconductor production and its location on critical maritime trade routes, many Australian companies haven't undertaken detailed scenario planning or risk-diversification strategies. That lack of urgency may stem from the perceived improbability of conflict or the absence of clear government direction on how businesses should respond.

At the same time, some business leaders expressed growing curiosity about the ROC's economic potential and a desire for clearer guidance from government and industry bodies on how to navigate the geopolitical sensitivities of engaging more deeply with Taipei. However, in the absence of a sustained policy push or dedicated trade strategy, commercial engagement with the ROC is likely to remain limited, reactive and secondary to broader concerns about regional stability.

Taiwanese and Chinese communities

Taiwanese communities' consultations indicate that some 25,000 Taiwanese youths now studying in Australian universities and colleges (10,000) or working in rural and regional areas on working holiday visas (15,000) are at risk in the event of a Taiwan Strait crisis. They'll need help managing their anxieties, contacting family and friends in the ROC, and averting violent attacks against them, similar to those directed at the Hong Kong democracy activists on Australian

campuses in 2019–2020. Some respondents from Taiwanese communities noted an uptick in aggressive and violent behaviour against them during the Covid-19 pandemic (on the assumption that they were mainland Chinese). Despite the significant presence of young Taiwanese in regional areas under working holiday visa arrangements, there are few community organisations equipped to assist Taiwanese in rural and regional Australia. There are few targeted support services on Australian campuses, which are prone to be occupied by warring parties, as has been seen during the Gaza conflict.

Chinese communities' representatives report risks of resurgent attacks on their communities—similar to experiences reported during the Covid pandemic—in the event of direct Australian engagement in a Taiwan Strait crisis. Few community organisations are equipped to assist Chinese-Australian communities fearful of attacks of that kind.

The impacts of a cross-strait crisis on communities

Taiwanese communities

Taiwanese communities feel pressured, marginalised and unheard. They experience daily frustrations managing their identities as Taiwanese-Australians, as systems and institutions are unable to recognise them as Taiwanese, or misidentify them as Chinese, but they also experience interpersonal warmth and sympathy from members of the communities and in their workplaces.

Taiwanese communities are also engaged in a constant negotiation of their identity as Taiwanese with larger and dominant Chinese communities, which require community members to adopt discursive tactics in the everyday on sensitive topics to avoid interpersonal conflict. They're anxious about threats from the PRC state and its proxies in Australia and have experienced harassment both at the interpersonal level and probably from PRC proxies.

Taiwanese communities are mobilised around their distinctive identity, have strong community organisations in different cities and vocal members, and maintain strong links to Taiwan itself. They have a deep understanding of the risks of a Taiwan Strait crisis and could be expected to mobilise and advocate in reaction to a crisis but would have to overcome a lack of understanding of their communities' identities.

The sense of insecurity among the Taiwanese diaspora in Australia varies significantly across different states and cities, reflecting both local demographic dynamics and the perceived intensity of political and social pressures. Communities' perceptions are shaped not only by external geopolitical tensions but also by day-to-day interactions with other diaspora groups, media coverage and the level of support from local institutions.

In Brisbane, the Taiwanese communities reported feeling comparatively secure and less politicised. That may be attributed to the size of the community in Brisbane, which is the largest in Australia and has its own community centre. Taiwanese-Australians in Brisbane described stronger community bonds and fewer confrontational encounters with other groups, including Chinese-Australian communities, and visible support from political and government leadership.

By contrast, Sydney emerged as the location where feelings of insecurity were most acute. Members of the Taiwanese communities there described a sense of being 'under siege'—not only from segments of the larger Chinese-Australian population, but also from elements of the broader Australian society that conflate their identity with contentious PRC-related issues. Participants reported instances of verbal intimidation, social exclusion and discomfort in public events, particularly when expressing support for the ROC's democratic identity or attending culturally or politically Taiwanese-themed gatherings. That sense of unease has been exacerbated by Sydney's larger, more politically diverse population and the higher visibility of organisations aligned with the CCP Central Committee's United Front Work Department.

In cities such as Perth, Hobart, Canberra and Melbourne, the sense of security among the Taiwanese communities fell somewhere in between. In Melbourne, for instance, the communities are relatively large and active, with visible cultural organisations and events. However, some individuals noted growing caution in how they publicly express views on the ROC, particularly in academic or diplomatic circles. In both Hobart and Perth, smaller Taiwanese-Australian populations reported fewer overt tensions but also felt more socially isolated and underrepresented in local policy or community discussions.

Taiwanese communities across Australia have *de facto* leaders who are articulate and willing to convey their communities' concerns. There are also older generations of Taiwan-born communities' members who exercise influence but whose views remain deeply embedded in the ROC's own political and social landscape and

translate less easily into wider community and policy settings in Australia. The views and perspectives of younger Taiwanese-Australians need to be canvassed more widely.

Overall, the level of community security experienced by Taiwanese-Australians is shaped by a combination of local demographics, social cohesion, diaspora politics and the perceived freedom to express views on the ROC without fear of backlash or misidentification. Those factors significantly influence how Taiwanese-Australians engage with public discourse and whether they feel empowered or marginalised in shaping narratives about the ROC within Australia.

The level of passive micro-aggressions against the Taiwanese communities in Australia is remarkably high. In any scenario in which a contingency occurs involving the Taiwan Strait, such micro-aggressions could potentially create vulnerabilities in the fabric of Australia's social cohesion and represent a failure (in government, academia and elsewhere) to treat Taiwanese-Australians as Australian citizens worthy of the same respect and protection as other Australians. While that might not be deliberate (and in many cases seems to be a consequence of benign neglect), it nevertheless represents a failure to support an Australian community and provide its members with the same rights and responsibilities as other Australians.

Chinese communities

No survey can do justice to the diversity of Chinese-Australian and Chinese resident communities and to the variety of views and perspectives among them. Those communities are distinguished by differences of nationality, place of birth, residency status, religion, age, gender, profession and political affiliations, among other differences.

Despite those differences, several common concerns arise in connection with the impact on communities of a major conflict in the Taiwan Strait. One is the likely impact on trade and commerce, which would disproportionately affect communities with close ties to the PRC. More serious concerns would arise if Australia were to be directly involved in any conflict. One is the prospect of large-scale communities' internment on the model of foreign national internments in Australia during the two world wars. Another is the possibility of racist attacks on local communities in the event of direct Australian engagement in a Taiwan Strait crisis. Those concerns are broadly shared across Chinese-Australian and resident Chinese communities and aren't confined to groups connected with the PRC. They also extend to communities with cultural or political attachments to the ROC, who likewise fear misidentification, targeting or exclusion in the event of a crisis.

While perspectives vary among communities on many matters relating to a crisis in the Taiwan Strait, polling data indicates that the aggregated sentiments of Chinese-Australians and resident communities differ markedly from broader community sentiment. Lowy Institute polling of those communities in the early 2020s reported significant variation from general community polling on issues such as trust in the PRC to act responsibly in the world, the value of the US alliance, risks of conflict in the Taiwan Strait, and support for Australian military engagement in the event of conflict.

In the final of the three Lowy surveys, published in 2023, six in 10 Chinese resident respondents (61%) believed the PRC would act responsibly in the world—five times the proportion in the general population (12%) that year. Australia's alliance relationships also drew markedly different responses. A slim majority of Chinese-Australians believe that the US alliance is important to Australia, compared to almost 90% of the broader population, and around a quarter (27%) believe AUKUS makes Australia safer, compared with half among the broader Australian community (52%). Further, a significant majority of ethnic Chinese residents polled believe Australia should be neutral in any conflict between the US and the PRC.[42] In the second Chinese communities survey, published in 2022, roughly one-third (36%) supported the use of Australian military forces if the PRC were to invade the ROC and the US decided to intervene, compared with half (51%) of the general population.

Diaspora identity politics and national-security implications

The Taiwanese diaspora in Australia faces significant challenges in terms of identity recognition. Many members of those communities feel marginalised due to the broader Chinese diaspora being recognised as the dominant group in Australia's multicultural framework. That marginalisation creates a defensive posture among Taiwanese-Australians, especially when they're faced with harassment from CCP supporters or proxies. The ROC's internal political divisions also affect diaspora mobilisation, as newer groups—such as international students and working holiday visa holders—have different political allegiances and community ties compared to traditional Taiwanese-Australian organisations. Those new groupings may respond differently in times of crisis, complicating the diaspora's unified stance. Additionally, social cohesion between Taiwanese and Chinese communities is fraught with historical tensions, often exacerbated by competition over limited resources and recognition at local government levels.

Social cohesion between Taiwanese and Chinese communities is characterised by vigilance and negotiated differentiation, yet, paradoxically, that relationship becomes ambiguous when business interests intersect. Even Taiwanese business associations report feeling pressure from competition with Chinese organisations. That competition is largely driven by contests over multicultural resources at the local government level and struggles for communities' spokesperson positions. Beneath those visible tensions lie deeper identity conflicts that could potentially trigger more severe social division during a crisis.

At a broader strategic level, the label of 'Chinese' is itself highly ambiguous. Whether applied to Taiwanese-Australians or Chinese-Australians, that catch-all category risks obscuring the distinct political positions, lived experiences and vulnerabilities of different groups. Treating both sets of communities under a single label can distort strategic assessments, leading policymakers to misinterpret the views of diaspora communities as proxies for the positions of external actors. Moreover, both Taiwanese and Chinese communities in Australia seek to distance themselves from the activities of governments, including the federal government. That longstanding gap makes them more susceptible to influence from the cultural and social outreach activities of both the ROC and the PRC. Many community members have limited awareness of Australia's foreign interference laws, and, without clear communication from the Australian Government, boundaries remain blurred. That lack of clarity undermines trust: diaspora communities are left uncertain about where legitimate cultural engagement ends and where foreign interference begins. For strategic planning, this represents a double risk: diaspora voices are easily misread, while their perspectives may also be shaped by external governments in ways that aren't transparent. Without stronger engagement and clearer signals from Canberra, both Taiwanese and Chinese communities remain vulnerable to being instrumentalised by outside powers while simultaneously feeling excluded from Australian decision-making.

The wider Australian community

The Australian community would be significantly affected by a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. As we've noted, such a conflict would have catastrophic economic consequences for Australia, which would be likely to play out through its impact on the Australian economy and standard of living. Irrespective of whether a crisis involves a trade blockade or is escalated to a warlike conflict, it would, at least temporarily, halt commercial shipping and air travel in the region. That would severely disrupt global and Australian supply chains, leading to increased costs, delays and a potential economic downturn that would have inflationary and/or recessionary impacts and could cost Australian jobs.

A disruption to the ROC's economy would send shockwaves through the global economy, directly affecting Australian businesses and consumers, impacting consumer electronics, telecommunication equipment and parts, computers, motorcycles and bicycles, and refined petroleum. Critically, shortages of advanced semiconductors would also undermine Australia's healthcare system, as many medical diagnostic machines and devices rely on chips manufactured in the ROC. A prolonged supply disruption could jeopardise timely medical testing and treatment, adding a public-health dimension to the crisis.

The Australian community would also be facing challenging strategic choices, in which public opinion would be likely to mirror the contradictions expressed by previous prime ministers during the 1954, 1958 and 1996 Taiwan Strait crises. As a conflict would probably trigger the ANZUS Treaty, and could potentially draw Australia into a confrontation with its largest trading partner, the Australian community would be required to decide whether Australian involvement in any crisis was a matter of choice for Australia. As any conflict would probably not be confined to the ROC, but would have the potential to escalate into a broader Indo-Pacific conflict involving key Australian security partners such as Japan and the Philippines, there would be a vigorous debate about Australian involvement. In scenarios in which actions in the Taiwan Strait were preceded by hybrid or grey-zone activities, which could potentially involve covert or overt active measures (such as cyberattacks and economic or societal coercive measures) or even pre-emptive strikes against critical infrastructure or military facilities in the region or Australia, such debate would be further exacerbated.

Polling data from sources such as the Lowy Institute shows a strong fear of the PRC among Australians. However, there's no public consensus on military intervention. While a majority would support actions such as accepting Taiwanese refugees (80%) and imposing economic sanctions on the PRC (76%), less than half (42%) would support sending Australian military personnel to the ROC to defend it from the PRC.

There would be likely to be considerable social cohesion impacts within Australian society. A conflict could lead to a significant increase in anti-PRC (and anti-Asian) sentiment that could strain the relationships between the broader community and Australia's large Chinese, Taiwanese and other Asian diaspora populations. In addition, Australians living in the PRC or ROC, including those of Chinese or Taiwanese background who hold Australian citizenship, would face direct risks to their security, safety, mobility and livelihoods. Their welfare would inevitably become part of Australia's crisis-management responsibilities, adding another layer of complexity to government decision-making. A crisis would place enormous stress on the Australian Government, which would have to manage public opinion, economic fallout and security decisions simultaneously.

Information sources and the manipulation of information during a crisis

To the extent that Australians receive information on the Taiwan Strait, and ingest that information, there's no one definite source or set of sources from which that information is gained. Quite a diverse range of traditional media, academic journals, social media and interpersonal linkages are employed by those with an active interest in the Taiwan Strait issue. Consequentially, and in the absence of any Australian Government communications on the issue, the Australian polity has limited capacity to differentiate factual information from mis- and disinformation on matters affecting the Taiwan Strait.

Government messaging

Government messaging around crises in Australia reflects a complex and often strained dynamic between federal, state and territory governments that has significant implications for industry and the broader community. The effectiveness of that messaging is a recurrent theme in post-crisis reviews, with a focus on consistency, clarity and trust.

The federal structure of Australia presents a unique challenge for crisis communication. While the Australian Government, through bodies such as the National Emergency Management Agency, provides national leadership and coordination, state and territory governments are the primary first responders in many crises, with statutory responsibility for protecting their citizens. That division of power can lead to friction and conflicting messaging.

A key criticism, particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, has been about the lack of a single, unified voice. Differing public-health orders, border closures and a 'one-size-fits-all' approach from the federal government that didn't always align with the on-the-ground reality of each jurisdiction created confusion. Conflicting public statements and a perceived lack of collaboration can erode trust between the different levels of government. The national cabinet was established to improve coordination, but disputes over issues such as quarantine and vaccine rollouts were often played out publicly, putting pressure on the collaborative framework. That lack of national consistency was often attributed to a breakdown in communication between federal and state leaders, leading to public mistrust.

While the federal government's role is to provide a broad national framework, the principle of subsidiarity—that decisions should be made at the lowest level of government capable of handling them—is a cornerstone of Australian crisis-management arrangements. Messaging that undermines or fails to acknowledge the autonomy and expertise of state and territory authorities can be counterproductive, as local leaders and emergency services are often seen as the most trusted sources of information by their communities.

Public messaging from government has a profound and direct impact on the daily lives of Australians and the functioning of the economy. When messaging is inconsistent or perceived as opaque, that can lead to a loss of public confidence in the government's ability to manage a crisis. This was a notable finding in inquiries into the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2019–20 bushfires, during which the public struggled to reconcile official advice with the severity of the events that people were witnessing.

For industries, particularly those operating internationally or across state lines, inconsistent messaging and policy can be catastrophic. Confusing travel rules, lockdowns and business support packages require constant adaptation and can lead to significant financial loss and uncertainty. Clear, consistent and forward-looking communication is essential for businesses to plan and build resilience.

The proliferation of digital platforms and social media presents a significant challenge. While the government has attempted to use those channels to disseminate information, the sheer volume of data, coupled with a lack of a clear, consistent narrative and a lack of translation services for non-English-speaking communities, can create fertile ground for misinformation and disinformation to flourish. That makes it difficult for the public to discern accurate,

lifesaving information from rumours and falsehoods. A critical failing in past crisis communication has been the 'universal' approach that overlooks the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as those with disabilities. A lack of translated materials, culturally appropriate messaging and accessible formats can leave those communities vulnerable and isolated.

In response to those challenges, the Australian Government has initiated several reforms. The Australian Government Crisis Management Framework has been revised to place greater emphasis on continuous improvement, coordination and a clear division of roles. The development of a new national messaging system, which aims to provide more reliable and targeted emergency alerts, is underway. Those reforms, however, will be critically assessed on whether they can achieve genuine collaboration and consistent, trusted messaging in future crises.

Traditional and social media

Communicating accurate information during a crisis faces significant challenges stemming from the interplay between traditional media and the modern social-media environment. The core issues are a fragmented information landscape, the rapid spread of misinformation and a decline in public trust.

While traditional media outlets such as television, radio and print are still vital for reaching broad audiences, they face their own set of challenges. Trust in traditional news media has been eroding, which can make it harder for accurate messaging to be accepted without scrutiny. Furthermore, the financial struggles of many news outlets mean they have fewer journalists on the ground to provide accurate on-the-spot reporting. That leaves a vacuum that's often filled by sources that are less reliable, malign, or both. The 24-hour news cycle and competition with online platforms put immense pressure on traditional media to report information quickly. In a fast-moving crisis, that can lead to the initial dissemination of unverified information or misinterpretations of official statements. Crisis events have become highly politicised, and media conferences are often a stage for political performance. The media's role in holding the government to account can sometimes overshadow the need for clear, unified public safety messaging, leading to confusion and mixed signals for the public.

Social media have fundamentally changed how information is consumed during a crisis, presenting a number of critical obstacles for the Australian Government. Social-media platforms allow misinformation and disinformation to spread at an unprecedented speed and scale. False information, such as conspiracy theories or incorrect safety advice, can quickly go viral, posing a direct threat to public health and safety. The Australian Communications and Media Authority has highlighted the urgent need to address this, noting that such content can erode trust in democratic institutions and crisis-management activities. The sheer volume of information on social media can make it difficult for people to find and trust official sources. That overload can lead to confusion and fatigue, making it harder for critical messages to cut through the noise. Unlike traditional media, which have a clear gatekeeping function, social media allow for decentralised information sharing. That makes it challenging for the government to control the narrative and ensure that consistent, accurate information is reaching the public. The public often trusts influencers and community leaders more than official channels, which requires a new approach to communication that leverages those networks.

The difficulties in both traditional and social-media environments are compounded by broader systemic issues. Australia's federal system means that, during a crisis, multiple levels of government (federal, state and territory) often issue their own public statements. That can create a confusing and contradictory patchwork of advice, as was observed during the Covid-19 pandemic and bushfire seasons. A lack of consistent messaging between leaders and agencies undermines public trust and makes it harder for the community to know whom to listen to. And, while social media are dominant for many, a significant portion of the population, particularly older Australians and those in regional areas, still rely on traditional media. A communication strategy that fails to account for that digital divide risks leaving vulnerable communities uninformed.

Chinese-language media in Australia

Patterns of news and commentary on the ROC and the Taiwan Strait in Chinese-language media appear consistent with Lowy Institute polling on the growth of general community concern over the ROC since 2021–2022. Across the spectrum of local Chinese media, reports concerning the ROC were infrequent and inconsistent before that time. From the middle of 2021, they picked up in frequency to the point where barely a week went by without significant news and commentary in Chinese communities' media concerning the ROC.

In view of the consistent level of coverage in local Chinese-language media since 2021–2022, the concentrated spikes that characterise news and commentary on the ROC in mainstream English-language media are apparent but less significant. The ROC is in the news almost every day.

The tone and substance of coverage have also shifted, along with frequency. Earlier mentions focused on trade issues and community affairs. In broaching cross-strait affairs, Chinese-language media were as likely to discuss prospects for peaceful resolution as possible conflict in the Taiwan Strait. More recent reporting increasingly emphasises the PRC's military build-up and intentions towards the ROC, the growing likelihood of confrontation, and political developments in the ROC such as elections and their implications for peace or war. Other frequent topics include:

- the Australian Parliament's engagement with the ROC
- PRC officials pressing Canberra for clarity on its ROC policy
- the ROC's exclusion from the World Health Organization
- the ROC's bids for CPTPP membership and an FTA with Australia.
- energy deals and bilateral trade.

Debates between prominent Australian foreign-policy experts have been widely reported, along with statements by federal ministers for foreign affairs and defence and published comments relating to the ROC by former prime ministers and ministers, think-tank executives, ambassadors and consuls-general representing the PRC and locally stationed TECO officers representing the ROC. In recent years, PRC consuls-general and TECO officers are as likely to be cited in Chinese communities' media as Australian Government sources on matters relating to the ROC and the Taiwan Strait.

Case study: *Sydney Today*

To illustrate those dynamics in practice, a case study of *Sydney Today* (*ST*)—Australia's most influential Chinese-language news platform—offers a detailed view of how Taiwan-related narratives are framed and received within the Chinese-language media ecosystem. Drawing on a dataset of roughly 3,000 articles and an average daily audience of 80,000, the platform provides a critical window into how Chinese-background communities interpret and react to geopolitical events. Engagement is consistently highest on stories about cross-strait relations, Taiwanese politics and Australia's diplomatic and military posture (for example, AUKUS).

ST doesn't present a single editorial voice. Instead, it functions as a critical aggregator and amplifier of a highly polarised media landscape. Its reporting strategy appears to be to maximise audience engagement by curating content that triggers strong, predictable responses from a divided readership.

The platform's success in driving public debate is rooted in its use of two powerful and opposing narrative frames.

Threat and crisis framing: ST frequently publishes headlines that employ incendiary and emotionally charged language to frame the Taiwan Strait issue as an imminent crisis. By selecting articles that use phrases like 'playing with fire' or 'igniting a war', the platform creates a powerful trigger for fear, anger and pro-PRC nationalism. The effectiveness of that narrative is clear: one such article generated more than 1,100 comments, demonstrating that a crisis-oriented frame is a highly effective tool for capturing audience attention and provoking intense debate. The strongest public responses are elicited by specific narrative frames that simplify complex issues into emotionally charged stories. The dynamic is reminiscent of the 'Squiz kids' case, which distorted the fact of Taiwan's independent statehood into a shallow moral panic over whether children were being misled about the likelihood of war.[43]

Official and authoritative framing: In parallel, *ST* gives significant prominence to official government pronouncements, particularly from sources based in the PRC or among its representatives in Australia. Articles centred on official documents, for example a Beijing White Paper on Taiwan, are framed as central, authoritative and non-negotiable declarations. That approach compels the audience to react directly to Beijing's official stance, either in support or in opposition. The most-commented article in the dataset, with more than 1,400 comments, successfully used this technique by juxtaposing an official paper with Nancy Pelosi's visit, forcing a debate anchored to an official government position.

In sum, the *ST* case shows how diaspora media can act as both amplifiers and gatekeepers, intensifying crisis-driven narratives, normalising PRC positions and shaping the boundaries of community debate. Those dynamics have far-reaching implications for Australia's ability to sustain an informed and balanced conversation on Taiwan. The risks are compounded by PRC-based social-media platforms that amplify content favourable to Beijing and hostile towards Australia, and by active pressure campaigns from Chinese diplomatic missions that seek to muzzle dialogue on Taiwan and threaten retaliation against business or cultural engagement. At the same time, government and industry self-censorship—driven by fear of losing access to China's 'buckets of gold'—further narrows the space for open discussion. Unless countered by alternative information sources, targeted media literacy and consistent government communication, Australia's discourse on Taiwan will remain fragmented, polarised and highly vulnerable to external manipulation in the event of a crisis.

Information warfare and the risks of political disengagement

The PRC's influence in the Taiwan Strait crisis extends beyond traditional military threats emphasised by Taiwanese diaspora communities in Australia. Chinese social-media platforms, such as Xiaohongshu, Douyin and WeChat, actively restrict discussions on sensitive political issues, effectively depoliticising the content shared. The platforms focus heavily on lifestyle-related topics such as food, travel and fashion, often downplaying or censoring discussions about the ROC. That strategy has a significant impact on overseas Taiwanese communities. By promoting content that suggests the Taiwan Strait crisis has no direct relevance to their daily lives, the platforms create a false sense of security, implying that the PRC would not attack Taiwan.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the PRC spread misinformation targeting Taiwanese officials in Japan, attempting to sow discord and deepen divisions within Taiwanese communities. Similar misinformation tactics will be used during a Taiwan Strait crisis to undermine the ROC's international legitimacy, create confusion and provoke internal divisions within Taiwanese communities. Such misinformation could weaken public resilience, erode trust in authorities and hinder an effective response to any potential escalation by cultivating a false sense of security or detachment from the crisis. Additionally, the PRC Government has employed AI-generated misinformation to manipulate public opinion, particularly in the ROC—a tactic that's already proven effective in previous crises.

Implications for government

Australian Government leaders, officials and agencies need to be aware of:

- the intensity and frequency of information warfare in Australia's Chinese-language media over the ROC and Taiwan Strait issues
- the likelihood that foreign government representatives are cited more often than Australian authorities on those issues
- the pro-PRC editorial strategies of the most influential media platforms
- the observation that intense media debates are direct outcomes of editorial choices to feature conflicting and high-voltage stories about the ROC and the Taiwan Strait
- possible modes of effective and balanced intervention ahead of any kinetic crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Next steps

This project has analysed the ways that key groups in Australia understand and react to crises in the Taiwan Strait in order to support the consideration of possible responses by the Department of Defence and the Australian Government.

It provides a snapshot based on the sentiment analysis, focus group engagements and one-on-one discussions that the project conducted. As noted in the first section, there are caveats and constraints in the analysis undertaken, shaped by current Australian attitudes towards engaging with research of this kind.

The information ecosystem, the geopolitical environment and the Australian domestic political landscape are fluid and constantly evolving as events, ideas and influences shape the discourse about cross-strait relations, Australia's roles and relationships in the Indo-Pacific and the domestic zeitgeist.

Accordingly, while this report presents a series of findings and recommendations for the Department of Defence and the Australian Government in managing Australian perceptions of possible crises in the Taiwan Strait, it shouldn't and can't be considered the final word on these issues.

The researchers suggest that continued analysis and engagement on these issues is vital to the ability of the Department of Defence and the Australian Government to prepare for, and respond to, crises. We propose that both organisations consider the following next steps as a part of that process:

- Develop a cross-sectoral preparedness framework that supports local governments, universities, SMEs and diaspora organisations in building Taiwan Strait–specific contingency plans.
- Pilot inclusive consultation models that go beyond demographic profiling, recognising internal diversity within communities.
- Invest in community-based media literacy and crisis communication to counter misinformation and strengthen public resilience.
- Commission longitudinal research into diaspora perceptions of national security and strategic risk, incorporating lived experience and emotional histories.
- Promote curriculum and research funding focused on Taiwan's political history, its regional role and Australia–ROC relations.
- Strengthen diaspora–government liaison channels by creating trusted points of contact in federal, state and local agencies for culturally and linguistically diverse communities during times of geopolitical tension.
- Encourage partnerships with independent Chinese-language media and multilingual journalists to broaden the range of perspectives available to Chinese-speaking audiences in Australia.
- Review all public-facing forms and data systems—particularly in defence, immigration and emergency management—to ensure that the ROC is listed as a separate classification.

Appendix 1: Scope and methodology

Scope

This report is in partial fulfilment of a Strategic Policy Grants Program grant, with the scope of the project to model how key groups in Australia understand cross-strait relations in order to predict possible responses in a Taiwan Strait crisis.

This supports the development of a whole-of-nation approach to national defence and resilience, in line with the Defence Strategic Review.

Methodology

In Stage 1, sentiment analysis was used to map narratives about Taiwan and cross-strait relations in social and mainstream media in Australia.

That analysis helped to shape interviews and focus group activities with community and corporate, media and educational leaders in Stage 2.

Sentiment analysis

The sentiment analysis was conducted using two tools:

1. *Factiva*—which examines publications in Australian media
2. *Meltwater*—which analyses social-media commentary about Taiwan on various platforms and creates word clouds and 'rough' sentiment analysis.

The sentiment analysis helped to determine how Australian attitudes to cross-strait relations and possible crises are formed, moderated and influenced by both traditional and social media. The sentiment analysis was undertaken as a time-series analysis commencing in 2020–21, to establish both a baseline trend (positive, neutral or negative) as well as an assessment of how attitudes are changed by events or issues in the public domain.

Among other events and issues to be specifically analysed were:

- the Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020 – May 2023)
- the World Health Assembly's rejection of Taiwan's request for observer status (May 2023)
- the Nancy Pelosi visit (August 2022)
- Australian parliamentary visits to Taiwan (December 2022, September 2023 and April 2024)
- Taiwan's application to join the CPTPP in November 2020
- Taiwan's 'nine in one' local elections (26 November 2022)
- the Taiwan elections (January 2024)
- the Taiwan earthquake (April 2024)
- the inauguration of President Lai Ching-te (20 May 2024)
- the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China Summit in Taiwan (July 2024)
- the Trump election (November 2024).

Through the sentiment analysis, we analysed how Australians think about cross-strait relations, how their opinions are moderated and influenced by the voices they hear (official, traditional media, social media etc.) and whether those influences have a positive or negative effect on their views. Additionally, the sentiment analysis helped to identify the impact of foreign interference, mis- and disinformation on the public discourse in Australia and the impact that those malign influences have on Australian sentiment.

The sentiment analysis specifically sought to provide quantifiable data on the following questions:

1. Which media outlets are most influential in Australia's discussion of Taiwan?
2. Are there any foreign media outlets that have significant readership and online engagement?
3. Which topics are most often discussed in relation to Taiwan?
4. What drives Australian interest in Taiwan?
5. What is Australia's sentiment towards Taiwan issues?
6. Is there evidence of any inauthentic activity in Australia's information environment regarding Taiwan?
7. What impact does Australia's 'one-China' policy have on its media reporting of Taiwan-related issues?
8. What role do think tanks, academic institutions and community groups (both Taiwanese and Chinese) play in shaping Australian media narratives about Taiwan?
9. What role does the Taiwanese diaspora in Australia play in shaping media narratives about Taiwan?

Focus groups and one-on-one discussions

Stage 2 of the project undertook a series of targeted focus groups, interviews and discussions to further refine the model of the relationship between public sentiment and institutional positions on Taiwan and its influence on policymaking. Focus group activities were conducted in:

- Canberra, 9–10 September and 29 November 2024
- Hobart, 14–15 October 2024
- Melbourne, 21–22 October 2024
- Brisbane, 6–7 November 2024
- Sydney, 19–20 November 2024
- Perth, 18–20 February 2025.

In each location, the project team identified key individuals and groups from business, media, civil society and education sectors that shape Australian public opinion and influence policymaking on cross-strait issues.

Business groups included:

- companies doing business in Taiwan
- companies doing business in China
- companies importing to Australia or exporting from Australia that would be affected by a crisis in the Taiwan Strait
- companies supporting defence capability and preparedness
- companies providing or requiring critical national supplies (petroleum, oil and lubricants; medical stockpiles; critical-minerals products; semiconductors; etc.)

Media groups included:

- traditional print media
- traditional television/radio media
- Australian Chinese-language print and radio media.

Civil-society groups included:

- Taiwanese communities' groups
- non-PRC-related Chinese communities' groups
- humanitarian assistance and disaster response groups

- community interest groups associated with defence or foreign policy issues
- Australian political parties (Labor, Liberal, Greens, independents).

Education / think tank groups included:

- university-affiliated centres for academic research on Taiwan, China and geopolitical analysis
- national-security and foreign-policy related think tanks.

Focus group guidelines

Discussions were closed-door, invitation-only events, conducted under the ASPI rule (no attribution of views given without the explicit concurrence and agreement of the individual participant or interviewee). The discussions were formatted under the following guidelines:

- The list of participants in the focus group will not be disclosed to any outside party, and everything said will be treated anonymously if used in the project's final reports.
- All views will be regarded as personal perspectives, including those of any government department or agency, unless previously agreed by the institution involved.
- The focus groups will not be recorded; an ASPI notetaker will take notes of the key issues raised but will not record who says what.
- ASPI has robust IT security and will take utmost care over all record-keeping.
- ASPI will be bound by its research ethics policy**.**

Indicative questions

Opening statement

This discussion is about a crisis in the Taiwan Strait and how Australia's policymakers, politics and public life understand such a possibility and how they might respond. It aims to anticipate the contours of public and policy discourse in the event of a crisis and identify key themes and issues, priorities and gaps.

The project has phases starting with a sentiment analysis and focus groups, and reports to the Department of Defence.

Taiwan is name-checked frequently in the national media and in policy discourse, but the project isn't testing against any norm of Taiwan discourse. There are no need, should, must imperatives that the project is aiming for. 'Don't know' is a meaningful response to questions.

Opening questions

- What are some issues in Australia's relationship to Taiwan that you think are important?
- Are there aspects of the bilateral relationship that don't get enough attention in policy and public discourse?
- Does your organisation in Australia have direct business links with Taiwan?
- In what ways do you think the future of Taiwan is politicised in Australia?
- In what ways do you think the future of Taiwan is politicised in your organisation?
- Does your organisation have a systematic institutionalised approach to Taiwan, or is it *ad hoc*?
- Are Australia's relations with Taiwan positive or negative?
- Compared to South Korea and Japan, how important to Australia is the relationship with Taiwan?

Crisis questions

- How likely do you think a crisis in the Taiwan Strait is in the next five years?
- What are the forms of a Taiwan Strait crisis you think about the most?
- How would you recognise if a crisis had begun in the Taiwan Strait?

- Are there specific roles or sources of expertise in your organisation that will be triggered in the event of this crisis?
- Are there specific responses from your industry sector that would distinguish the kinds of crisis responses it might have.

Risk-management questions

- Has your organisation conducted any scenario planning or risk assessment around a Taiwan Strait crisis?
- Are there any specific risk parameters your organisation or your industry sector are calculating?
- In a key crisis scenario, the PLAAF flies a large armed UAV into Taiwan's 12-nautical-mile airspace, and the Taiwanese shoot it down. How would your organisation respond or who would you look to for a response?
- What are the key effects of a Taiwan Strait crisis in Australia, even if they aren't identified as risks?
- What are the key risks that you identify will eventuate from a Taiwan Strait crisis?
- Is your organisation prepared for a Taiwan Strait crisis?
- What steps do you think your organisation should take to better prepare for a Taiwan Strait crisis?

Discourse questions

- What is the best source of information about Taiwan and regional security?
- Who is responsible for a crisis in the Taiwan Strait?
- Who is responsible for peace in the Taiwan Strait?
- What would be the best way to avoid a crisis in the Taiwan Strait?
- Would Australia be more secure if Taiwan was annexed by China?
- Does Australia have a role in supporting Taiwan's democracy?
- Do you think Australia's one-China policy is still relevant in the current moment to manage relations with China and Taiwan?
- Is the United States likely to miscalculate China's resolve to achieve unification and destabilise the region?
- Do you think Australia has military obligations towards Taiwan in a crisis?

Appendix 2: Joint Communique of the Australian Government and the Government of the People's Republic of China Concerning the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Australia and China

The Australian Government and the Government of the People's Republic of China, in conformity with the interests and common desire of the two peoples, have decided upon mutual recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations as from 21 December 1972.

The two Governments agree to develop diplomatic relations, friendship and co-operation between the two countries on the basis of the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence.

The Australian Government recognises the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal Government of China, acknowledges the position of the Chinese Government that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China, and has decided to remove its official representation from Taiwan before 25 January 1973.

The Government of the People's Republic of China appreciates the above stand of the Australian Government.

The two Governments have agreed to exchange Ambassadors as soon as the administrative formalities and practical arrangements have been completed, and to provide each other with all the necessary assistance for the establishment and performance of the functions of diplomatic missions in their respective capitals on the basis of equality and mutual benefit and in accordance with international law and practice.

For the Australian Government

(signed)

Alan Renouf

Australian Ambassador to France
Paris, 21 December 1972

For the Government of the People's Republic of China

(signed)

Huang Chen

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to France

Appendix 3: Detailed sentiment analysis

For the sentiment analysis, we used Meltwater, which is a leading media monitoring and analytics platform, to collect and examine data from a wide range of online sources. Meltwater enables the tracking of news coverage, social-media conversations and broader digital discourse, allowing us to measure both the volume and the tone of mentions over time.

In order to understand the dynamics of Taiwan-related content in the Australian media environment more clearly, we focused on four key categories of analysis:

1. *Mentions trend by volume:* the aggregate trend of mentions and spikes in attention.
2. *Most engaged content on X:* the stories and posts that generated the highest levels of interaction.
3. *Top keywords and entities:* the recurring terms, people and organisations shaping the narrative.
4. *Top keyword sentiments:* the positive and negative language most frequently associated with mentions.

Together, those categories provide a structured view of both the scale of the conversation and the sentiment driving it.

Mentions trend by volume: This visualisation tracks the overall trend of mention activity across different sources over time. It displays both the total and average number of mentions per day, while also highlighting the percentage change compared to the previous reporting period.

When a statistically significant shift in news or social-media conversations occurs, AI-driven 'spike' insights are surfaced. The spikes indicate sudden surges of attention around a topic. For a spike to be recognised, it must meet two thresholds: at least 25 mentions and a minimum of seven data points within the trendline. Those criteria ensure that spikes represent genuine changes in activity rather than noise. It's important to note that YouTube data is excluded from this analysis, in line with platform policy restrictions.

Most engaged content on X: This view highlights the search results that generated the most engagement from users, measured through interactions such as likes, shares, reposts and comments. By identifying the most actively engaged content, analysts can see which stories, posts or narratives are resonating most strongly with audiences. Engagement provides a useful proxy for influence, since high interaction suggests greater visibility and impact. YouTube data is excluded from this visualisation, in accordance with platform policies.

Top keywords and entities: This view identifies the most frequently appearing terms and entities within the collected mentions. Those can include keywords, hashtags, emojis, individual people, products, places or organisations. By analysing the prominence of those terms, analysts gain insight into the framing of the conversation, the actors most frequently discussed, and the symbolic language that shapes sentiment.

Top keyword sentiments: This element breaks down which keywords are most frequently associated with positive or negative sentiment. Tracking those distinctions helps to identify the tone of conversation and the language that drives support or criticism. As for the previous sections, YouTube data is excluded from this visualisation, in line with platform policies.

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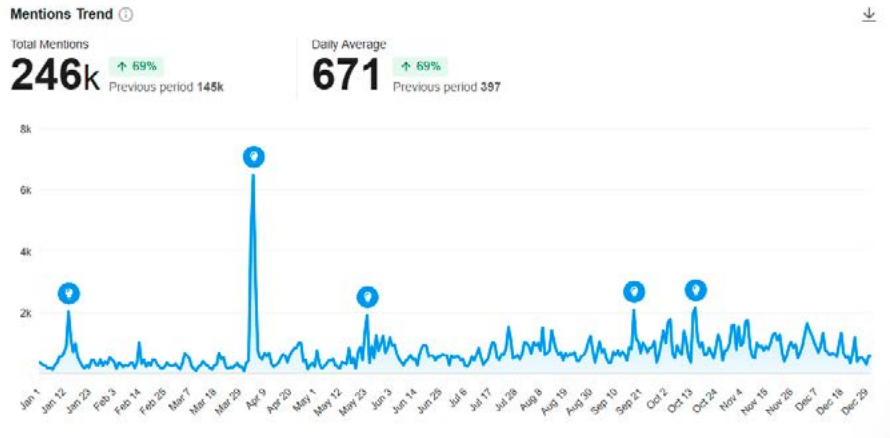
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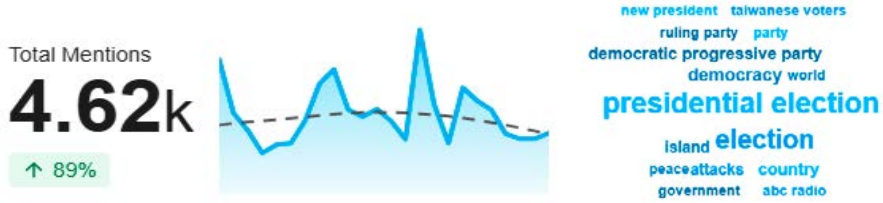
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Taiwan in the 2024 Australian information environment

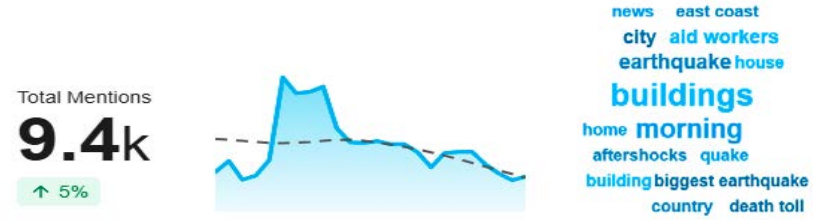
Figure 11: Mentions



Spike 1: 15 January 2024



Spike 2: 4 April 2024



Spike 3: 24 May 2024

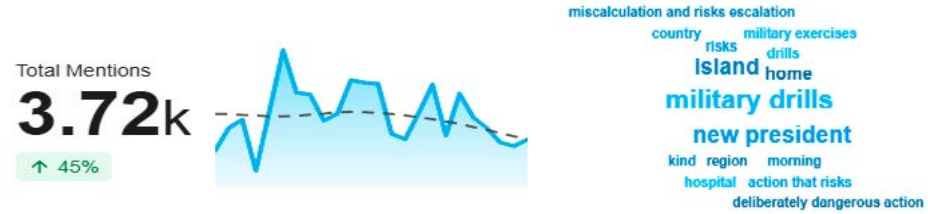


Figure 12: Most engaged content on X

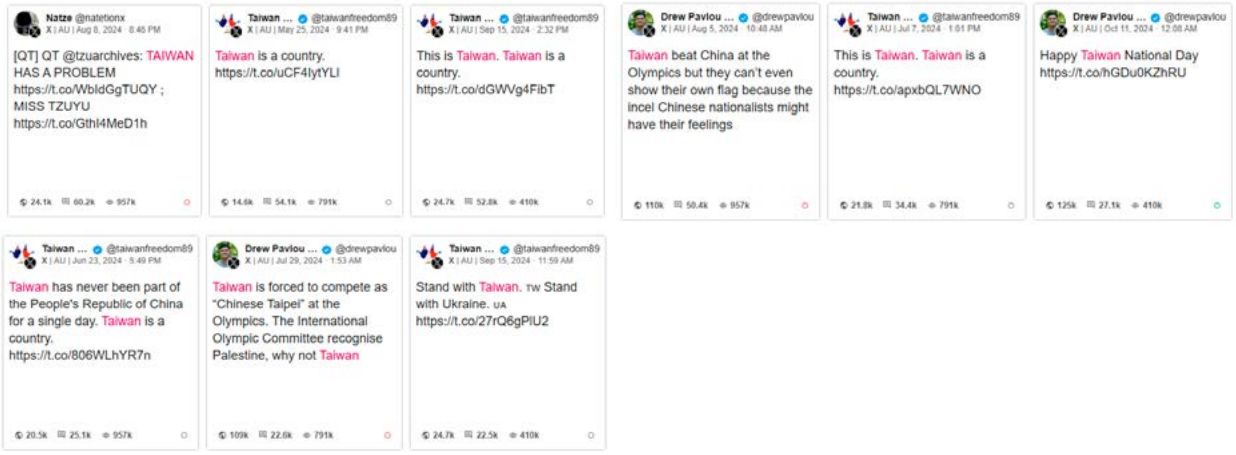


Figure 13: Top keywords and entities

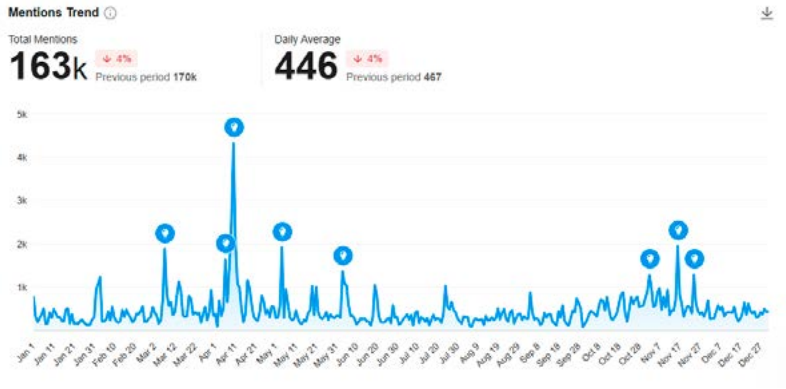


Figure 14: Top keyword sentiments



Taiwan in the 2023 Australian information environment

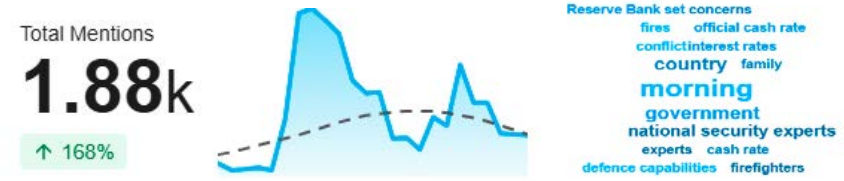
Figure 15: Taiwan in the 2023 Australian information environment: mentions



Largest spike: 10 April 2023



Second largest spike: 7 March 2023



Third largest spike: 4 May 2023

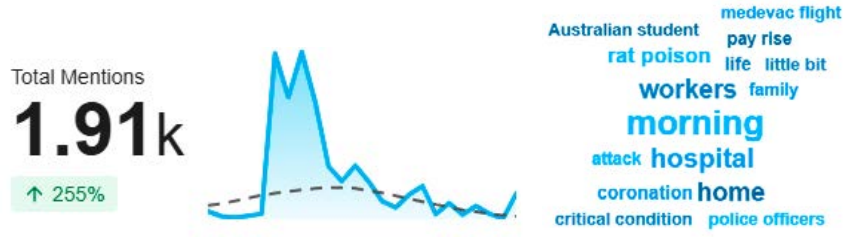


Figure 16: Most engaged content on X: Taiwan (2023)

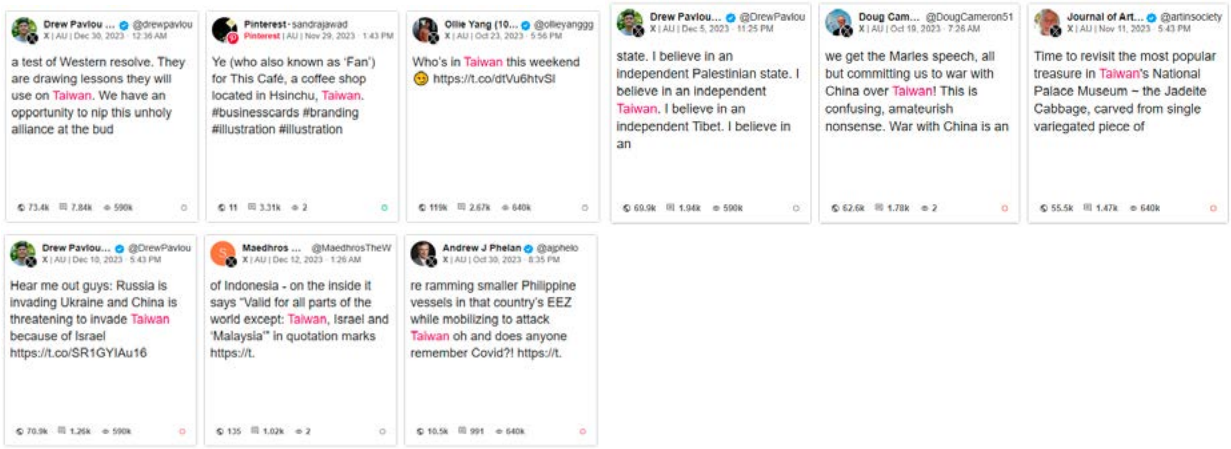


Figure 17: Top keywords and entities

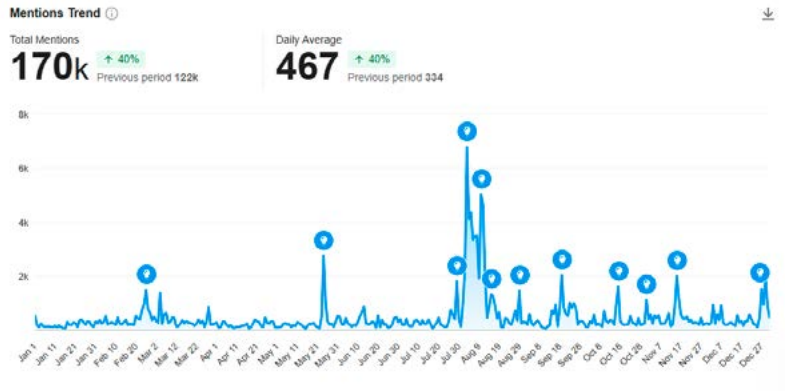


Figure 18: Top keyword sentiments

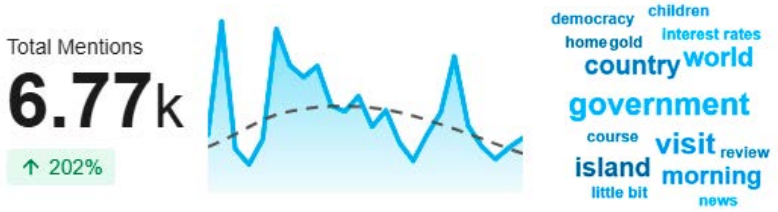


Taiwan in the 2022 Australian information environment

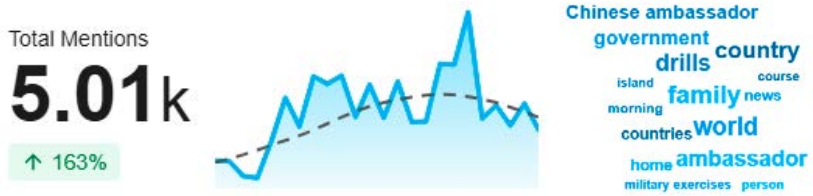
Figure 19: Taiwan in the 2022 Australian information environment: mentions



Largest spike: 3 August 2022



Second largest spike: 10 August 2022



Third largest spike: 24 May 2022



Figure 20: Most engaged content on X

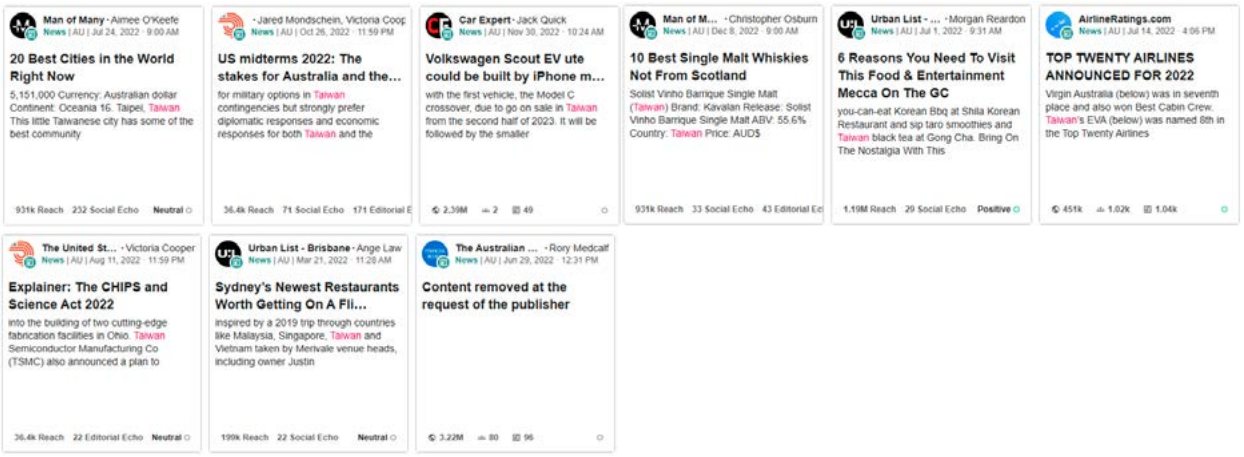


Figure 21: Top keywords and entities

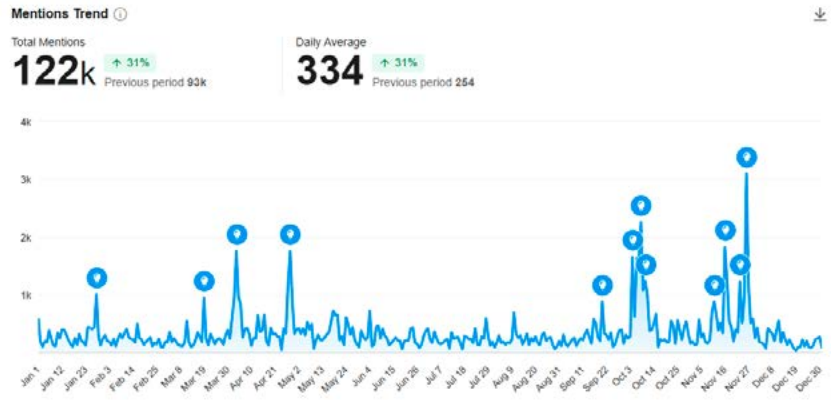


Figure 22: Top keyword sentiments

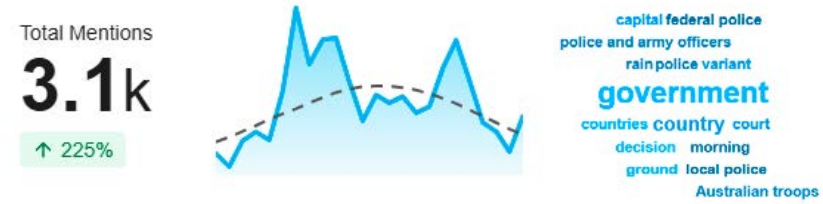


Taiwan in the 2021 Australian information environment

Figure 23: Taiwan in the 2021 Australian information environment: mentions



Largest spike: 26 November 2021



Second largest spike: 8 October 2021



Third largest spike: 28 April 2021



Figure 24: Most engaged content on X

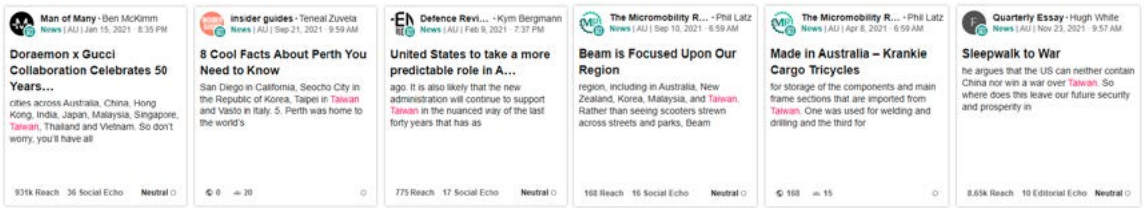


Figure 25: Top keywords and entities

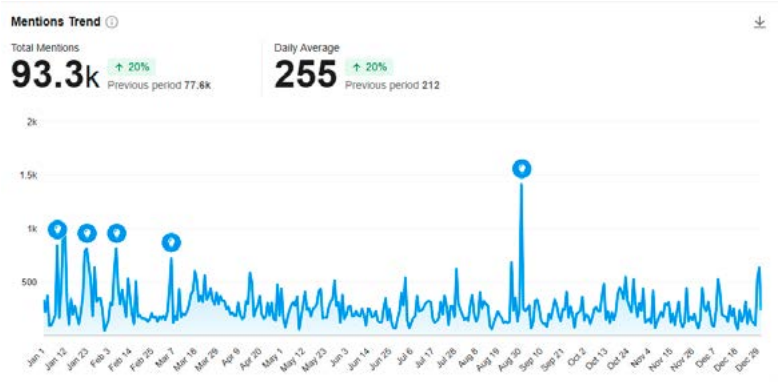


Figure 26: Top keyword sentiments



Taiwan in the 2020 Australian information environment

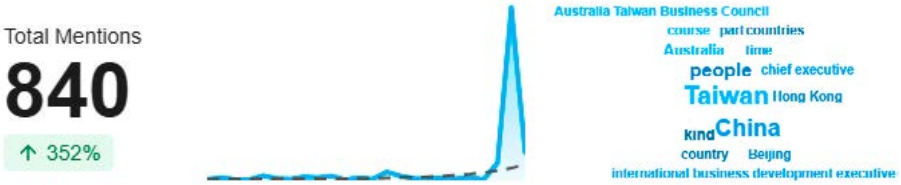
Figure 27: Taiwan in the 2020 Australian information environment: mentions



Largest spike: 31 August 2020



Second largest spike: 8 January 2020



Third largest spike: 23 January 2020

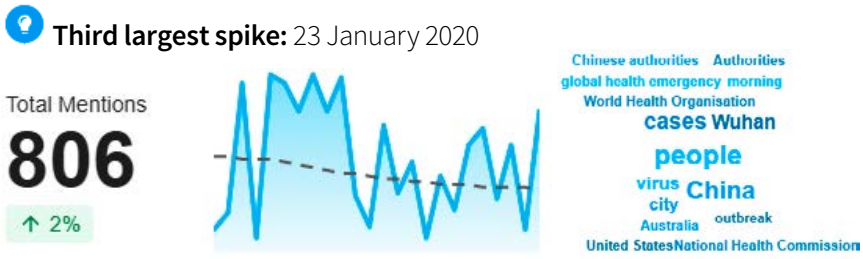


Figure 28: Most engaged content on X

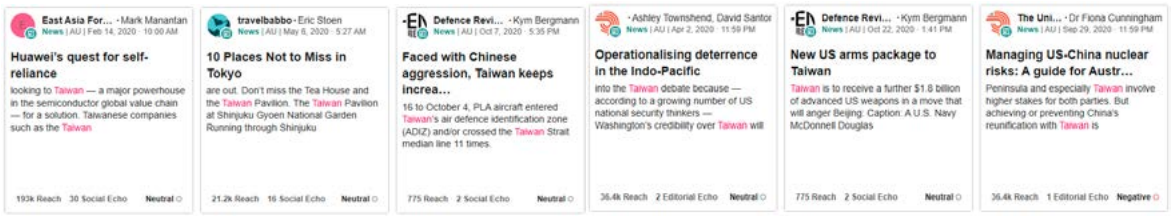


Figure 29: Top keywords and entities



Figure 30: Top keyword sentiments



Figure 31: Mentions

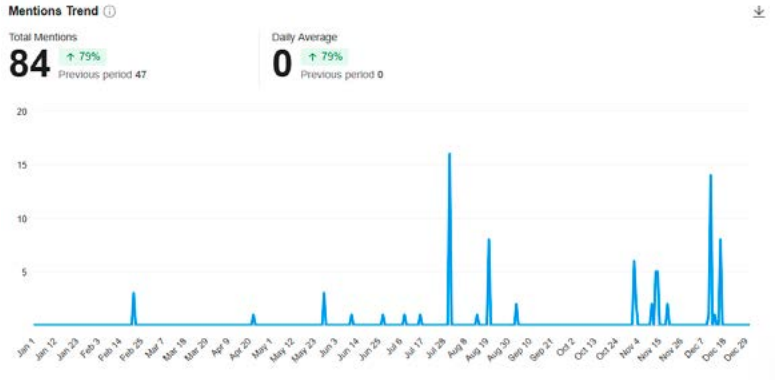


Figure 32: Most engaged content on X

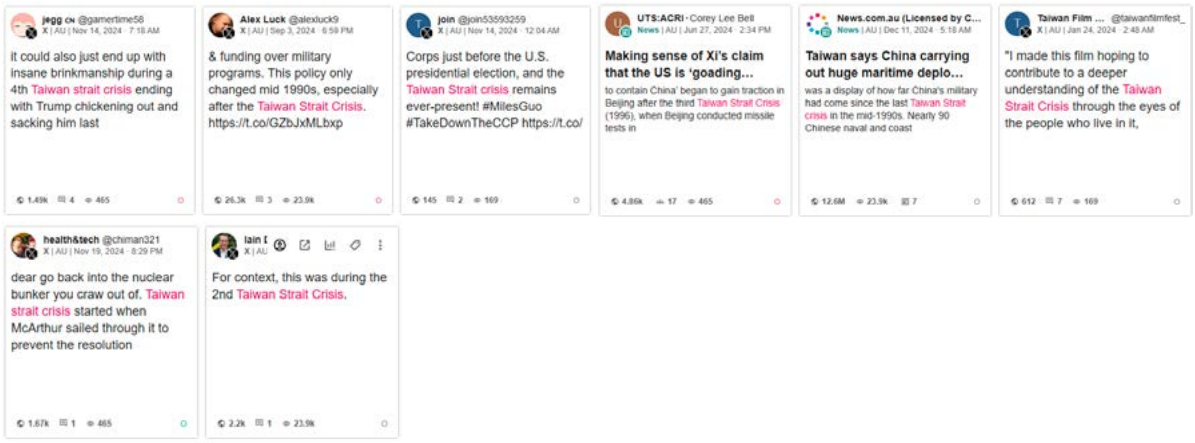


Figure 33: Top keywords and entities



Figure 34: Top keyword sentiments



A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2023 Australian information environment

Figure 35: A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2023 Australian information environment: mentions

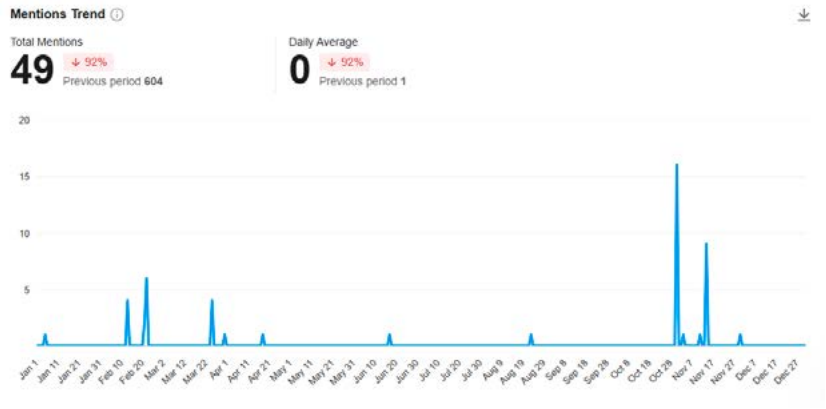


Figure 36: Most engaged content on X

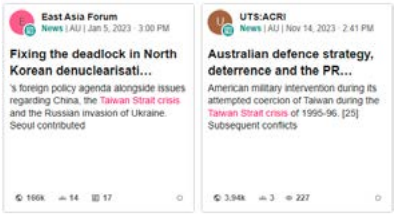


Figure 37: Top keywords and entities

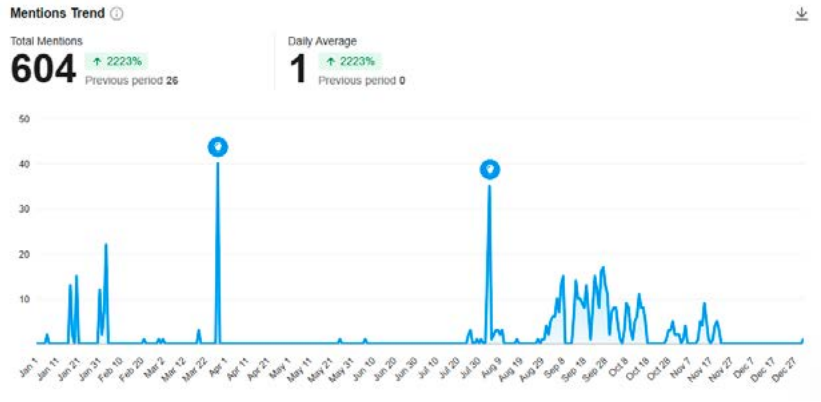


Figure 38: Top keyword sentiments

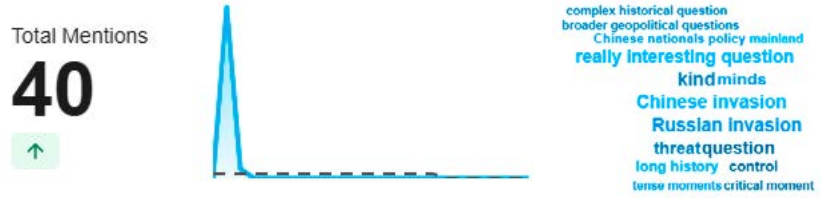


A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2022 Australian information environment

Figure 39: A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2022 Australian information environment: mentions



Spike 1: 28 March 2022



Spike 2: 4 August 2022

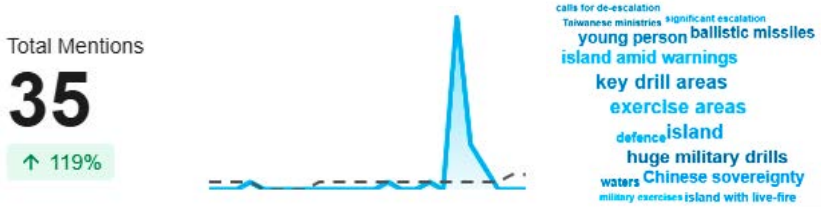


Figure 40: Most engaged content on X

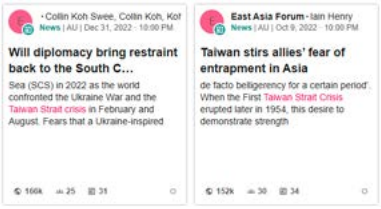


Figure 41: Top keywords and entities

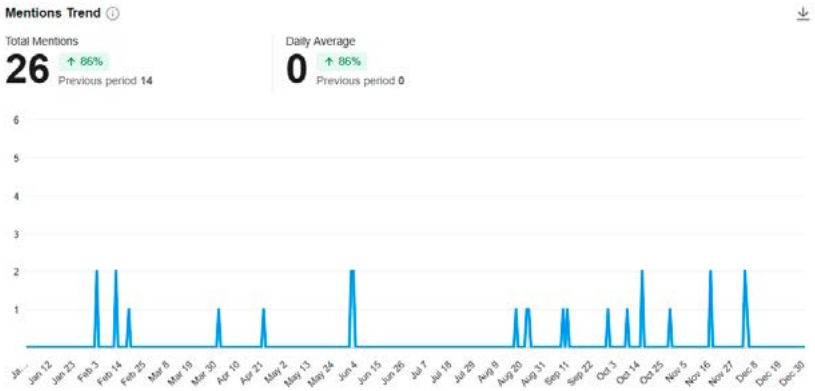


Figure 42: Top keyword sentiments



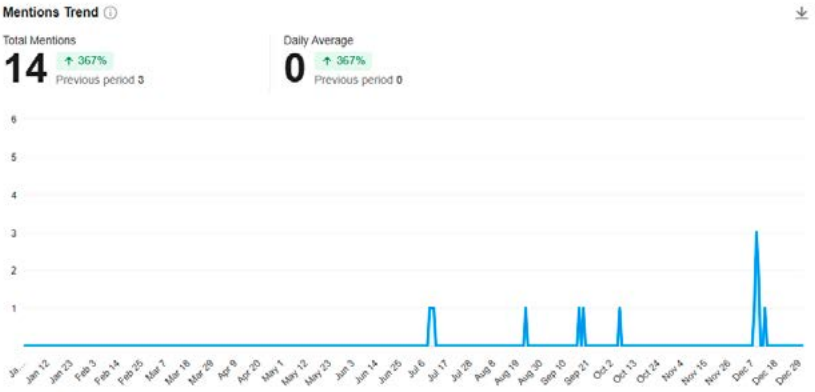
A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2021 Australian information environment

Figure 43: A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2021 Australian information environment: mentions



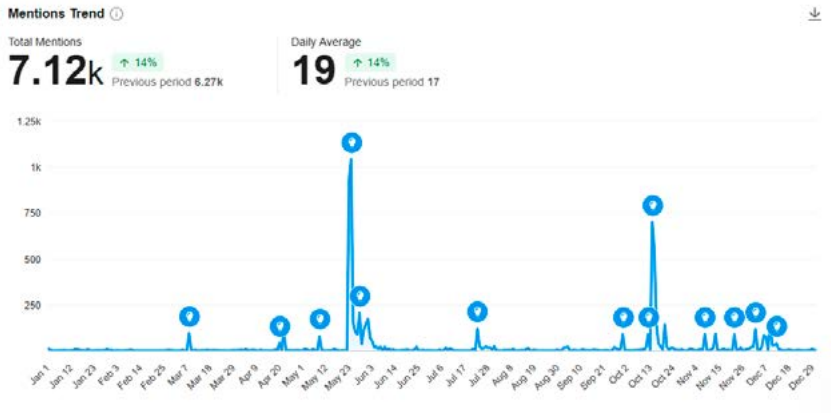
A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2020 Australian information environment

Figure 44: A ‘Taiwan Strait crisis’ in the 2020 Australian information environment: mentions

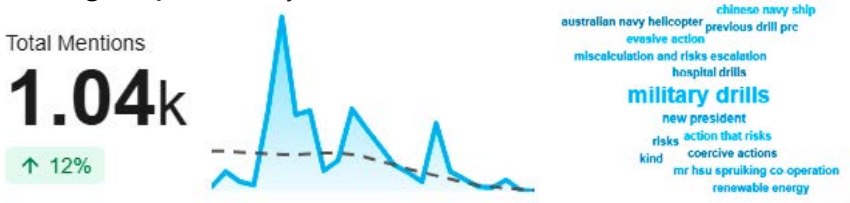


Taiwan and military drills in 2024

Figure 45: Taiwan and military drills in 2024: mentions



Largest spike: 24 May 2024



Second largest spike: 14 October 2024

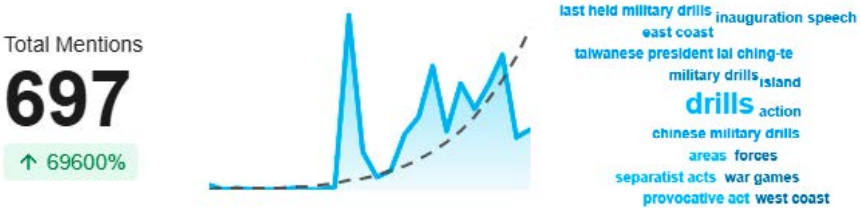


Figure 46: Most engaged content on X

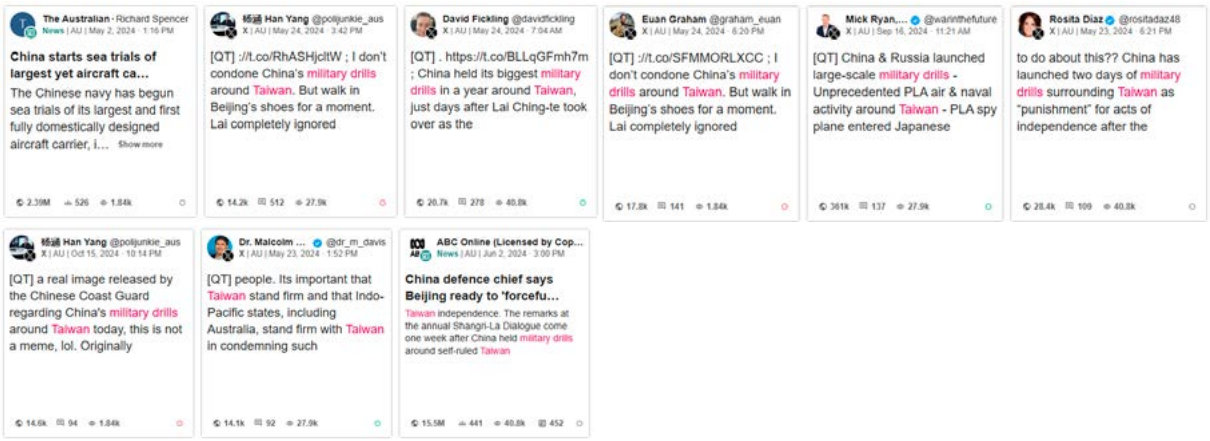


Figure 47: Top keywords and entities

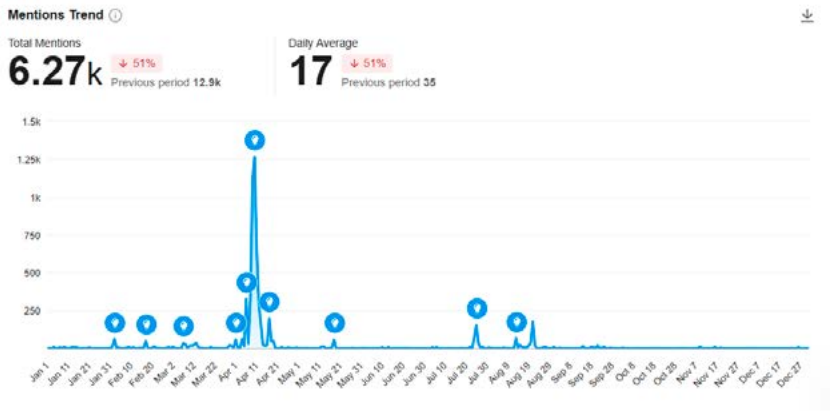


Figure 48: Top keyword sentiments



Taiwan and military drills in 2023

Figure 49: Taiwan and military drills in 2023: mentions



Largest spike: 10 April 2023

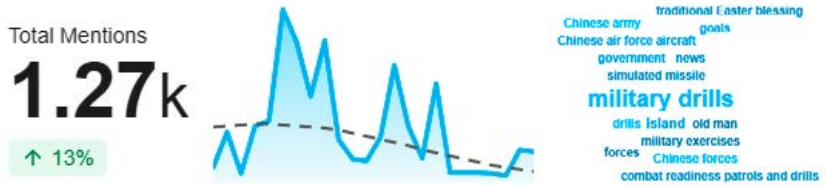


Figure 50: Most engaged content on X

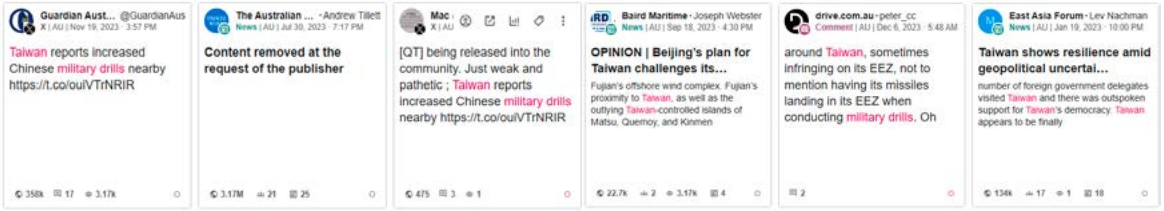
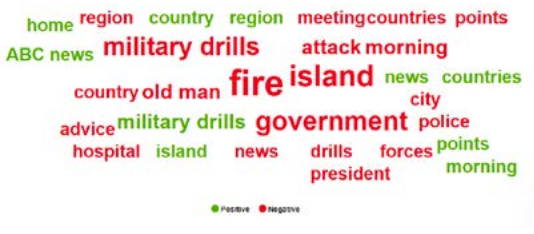


Figure 51: Top keywords and entities

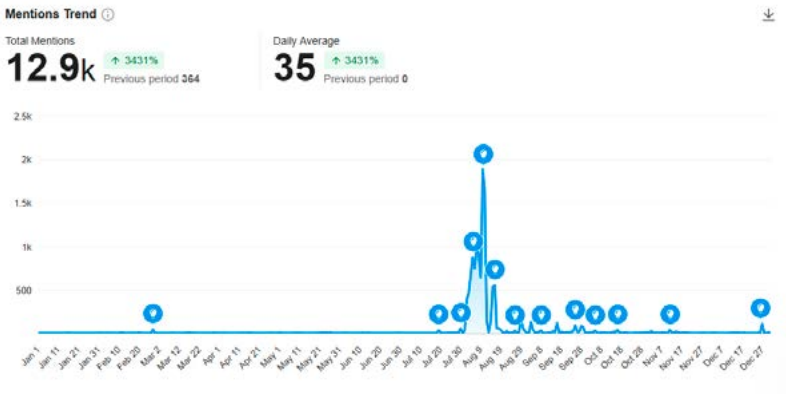


Figure 52: Top keyword sentiments

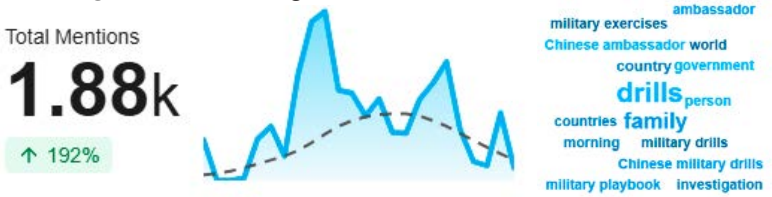


Taiwan and military drills in 2022

Figure 53: Taiwan and military drills in 2022: mentions



Largest spike: 10 August 2022



Second largest spike: 8 August 2022

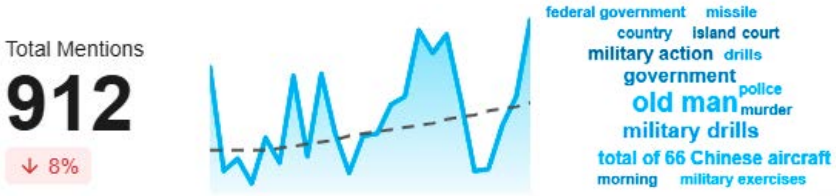


Figure 54: Most engaged content on X

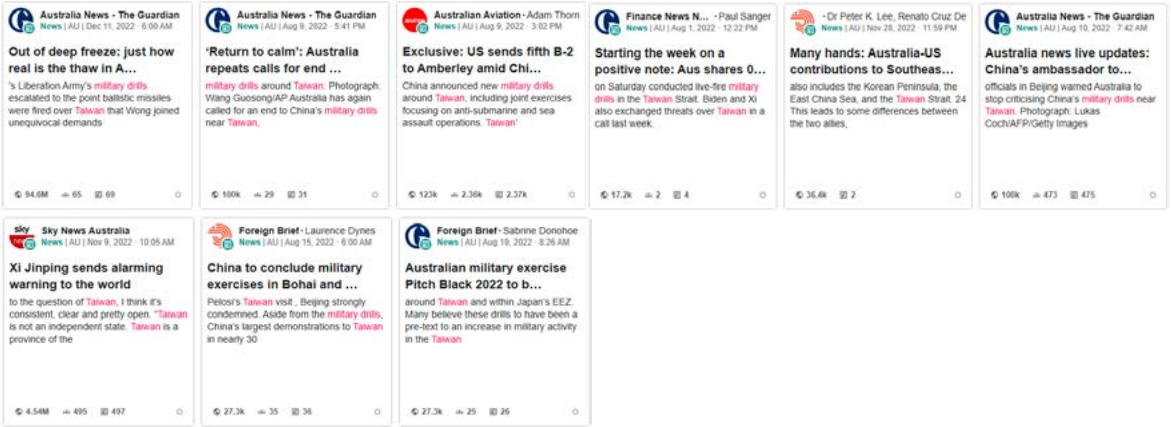
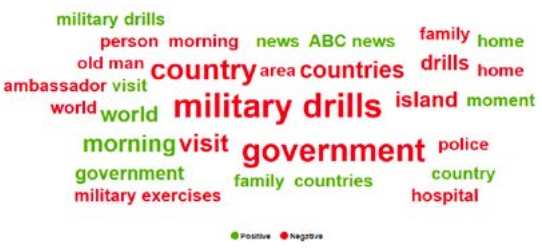


Figure 55: Top keywords and entities

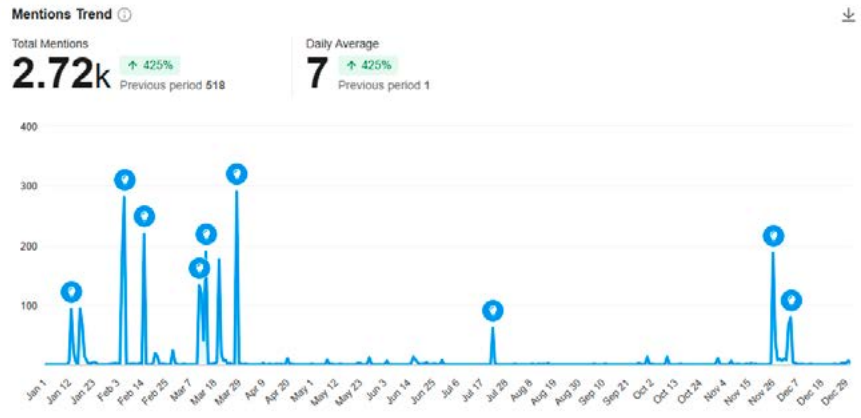


Figure 56: Top keyword sentiments

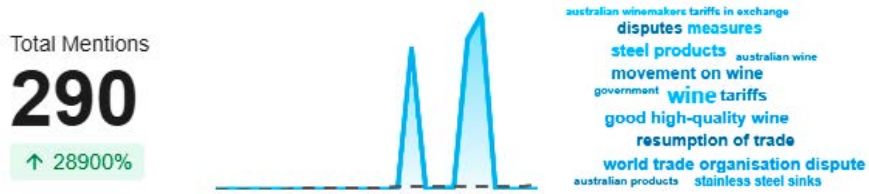


China’s diplomatic presence in Australia’s Taiwan commentary in 2024

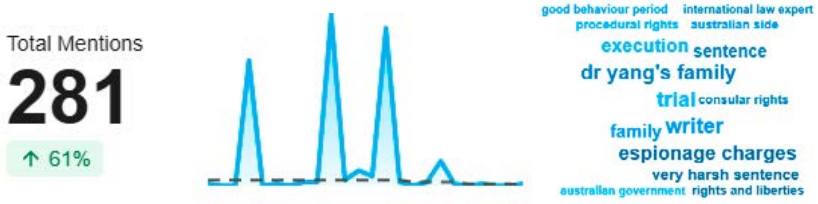
Figure 57: China’s diplomatic presence in Australia’s Taiwan commentary in 2024: mentions



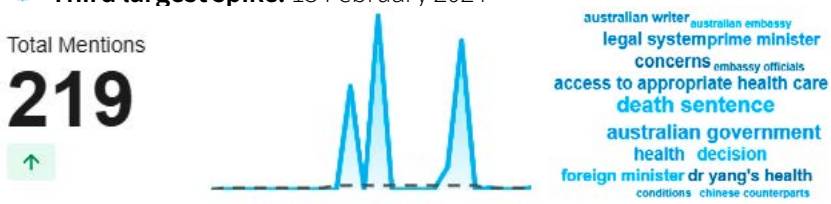
Largest spike: 28 March 2024



Second largest spike: 6 February 2024



Third largest spike: 15 February 2024



Third largest spike: 26 November 2024

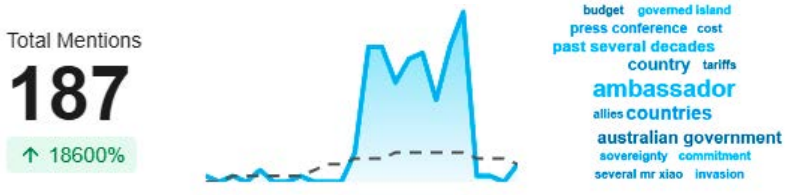


Figure 58: Most engaged content on X

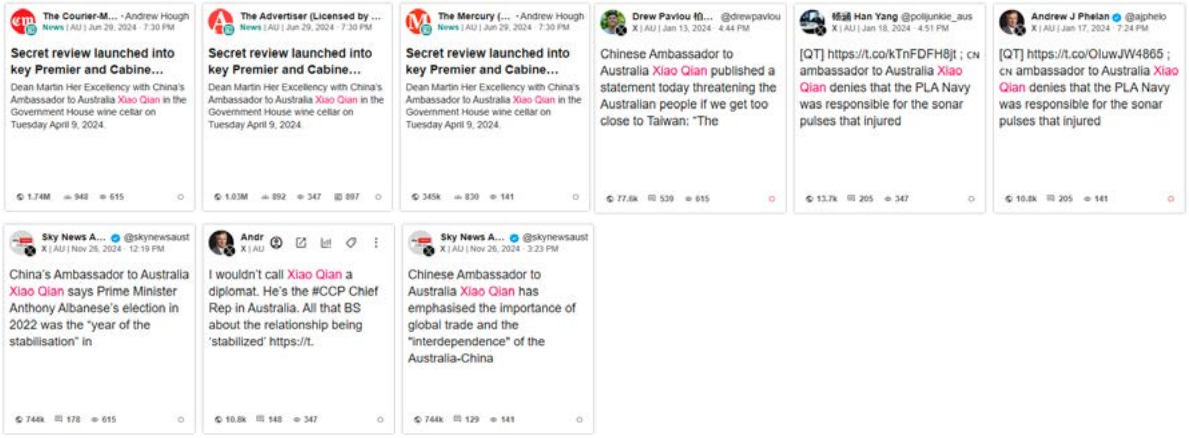


Figure 59: Top keywords and entities

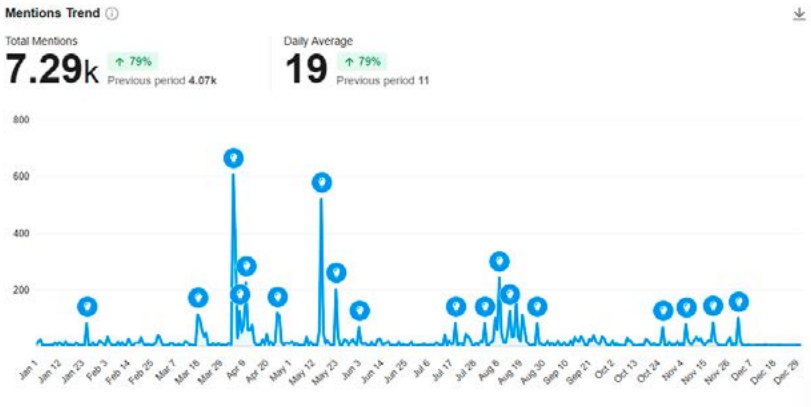


Figure 60: Top Keywords Sentiment



Taiwan in Australia's AUKUS commentary

Figure 61: Taiwan in Australia's AUKUS commentary: mentions



Largest spike: 4 April 2024



Second largest spike: 16 May 2024

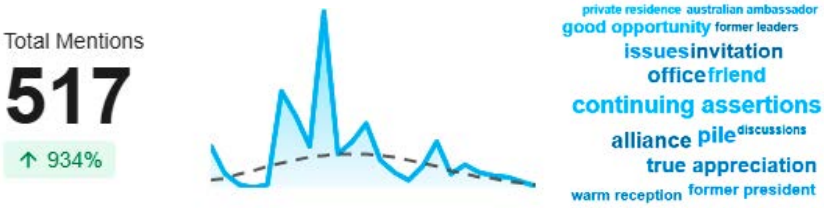


Figure 62: Most engaged content on X



Figure 63: Top keywords and entities

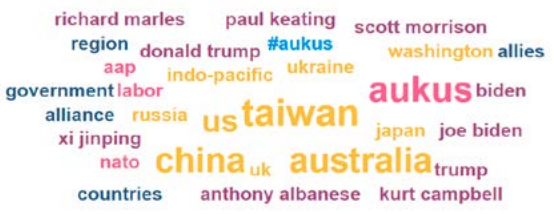
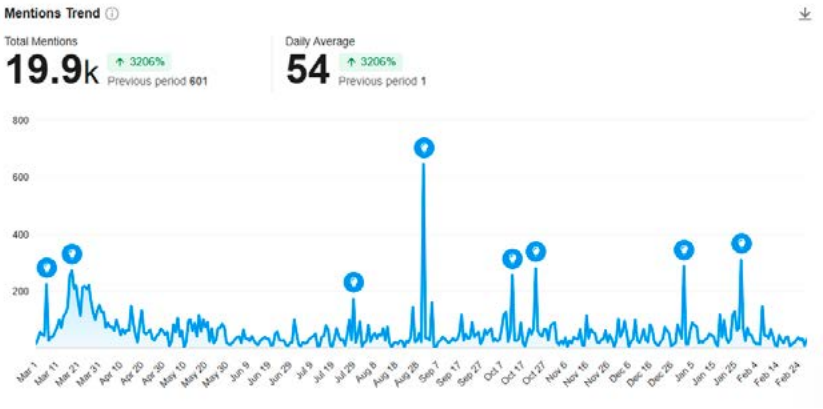


Figure 64: Top keyword sentiments



The Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020 – May 2023)

Figure 65: The Covid-19 pandemic (March 2020 – May 2023): mentions



Largest spike: 31 August 2020



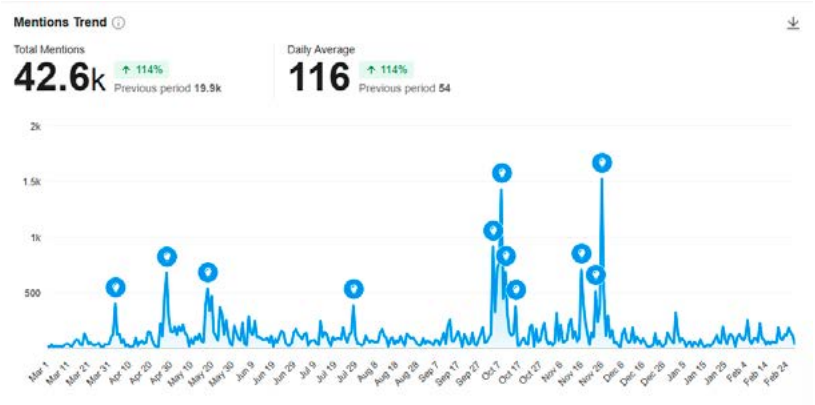
Figure 66: Top keywords and entities



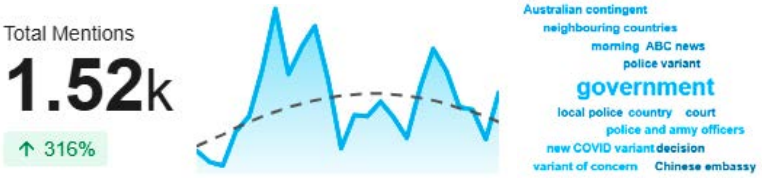
Figure 67: Top keyword sentiments



Figure 68: Pandemic: Year Two (1 March 2021 to 1 March 2022): mentions



Largest spike: 26 November 2021



Second largest spike: 8 October 2021



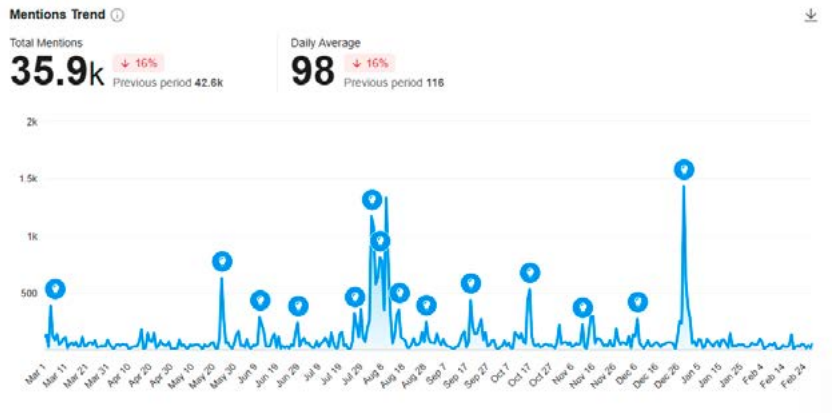
Figure 69: Top keywords and entities



Figure 70: Top keyword sentiments



Figure 71: Pandemic: Year Three (1 March 2022 to 1 March 2023): mentions



Largest spike: 26 November 2021

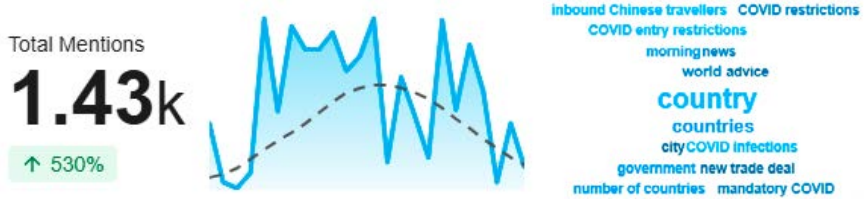


Figure 72: Top keywords and entities

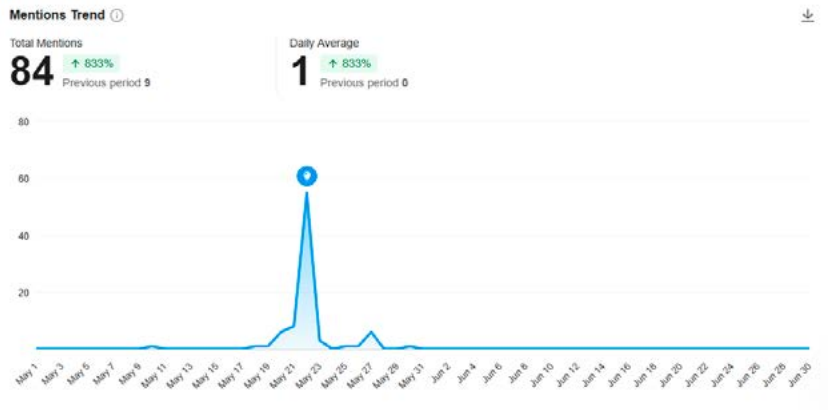


Figure 73: Top keyword sentiments



The World Health Assembly's rejection of Taiwan's request for observer status (May 2023)

Figure 74: Mentions



Spike 1: 22 May 2023

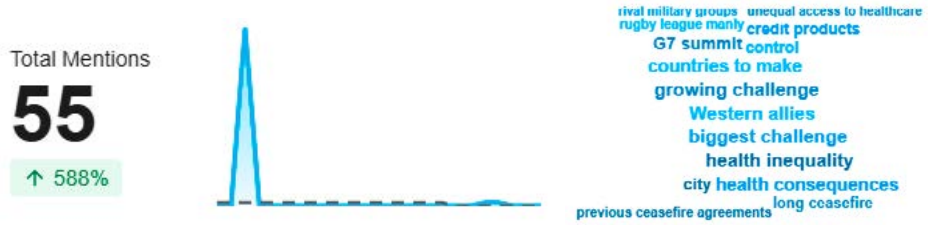
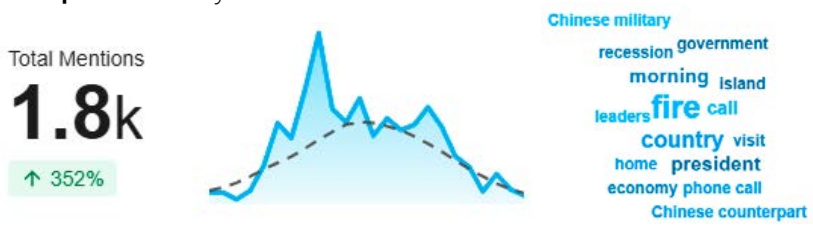


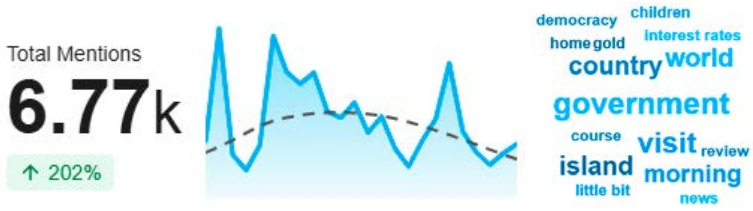
Figure 75: Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan (August 2022)



Spike 1: 29 July 2022



Spike 2: 3 August 2022



Spike 3: 10 August 2022



Figure 76: Most engaged content on X

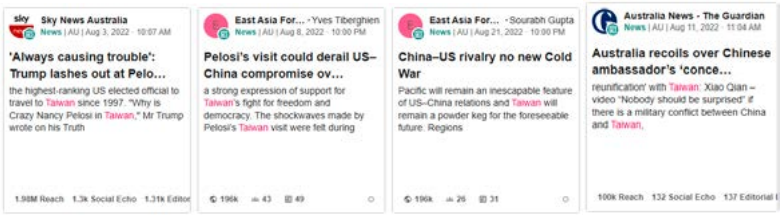


Figure 77: Top keywords and entities

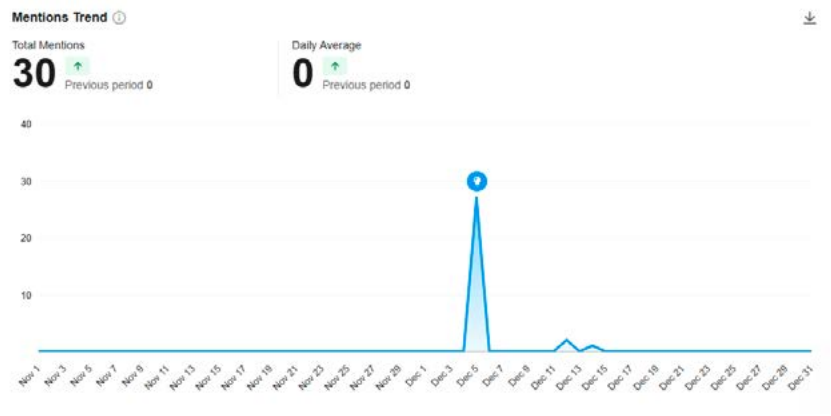


Figure 78: Top keyword sentiments



Australian parliamentary visits to Taiwan (December 2022, September 2023 and April 2024)

Figure 79: Australian parliamentary visit to Taiwan (December 2022): mentions



Spike 1: 5 December 2022

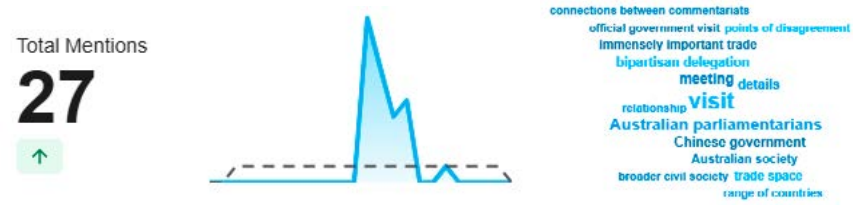
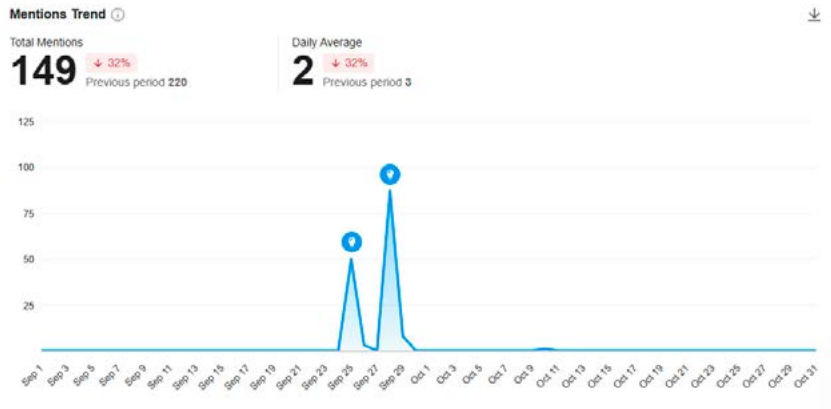


Figure 80: Top keywords and entities



Figure 81: Australian parliamentary visit to Taiwan (September 2023): mentions



Spike 1: 25 September 2023



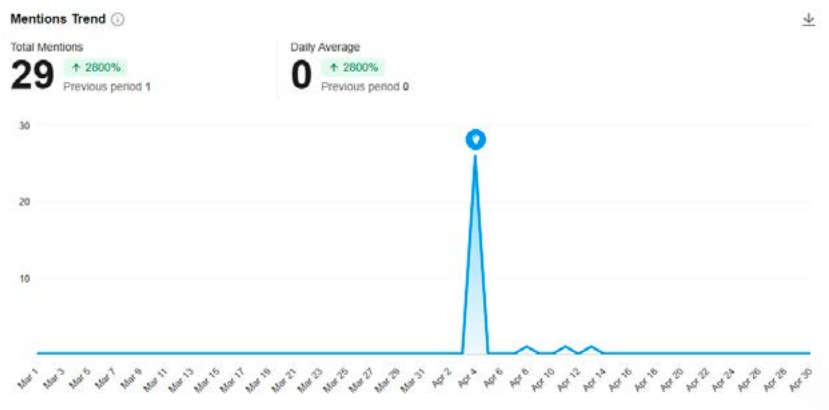
Spike 2: 25 September 2023



Figure 82: Top keywords and entities



Figure 83: Australian parliamentary visit to Taiwan (April 2024): mentions



Spike 1: 4 April 2024

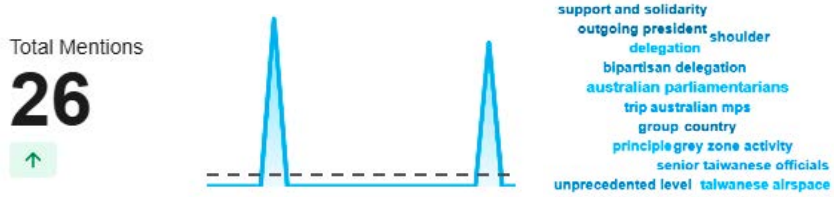


Figure 84: Top keywords and entities



Taiwan's application to join the CPTPP (November 2020)

Figure 85: Mentions



Figure 86: Top keywords and entities

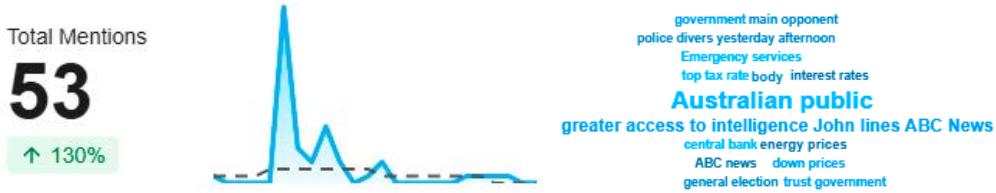


Taiwan's 'nine in one' local elections (26 November 2022)

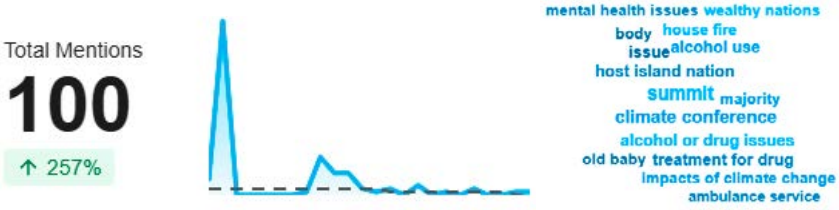
Figure 87: Mentions



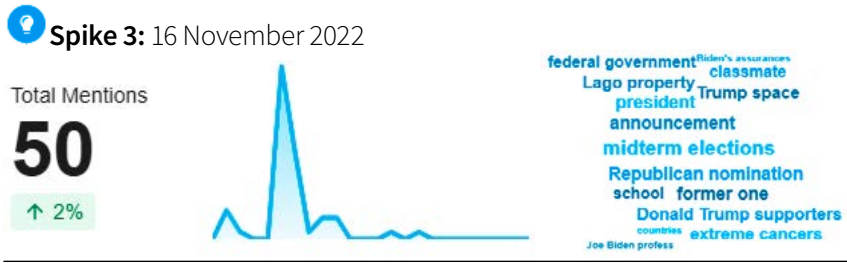
Spike 1: 4 November 2022



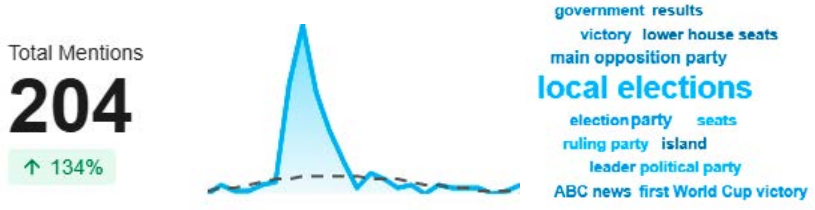
Spike 2: 10 November 2022



Spike 3: 16 November 2022



Spike 4: 27 November 2022



Spike 5: 5 December 2022



Figure 88: Top keywords and entities



Figure 89: Top keyword sentiments



Taiwan's national elections (January 2024)

Figure 90: Mentions



Spike 1: 14 January 2024



Spike 2: 17 January 2024

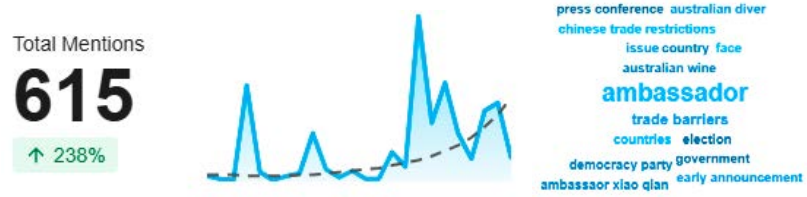


Figure 91: Most engaged content on X

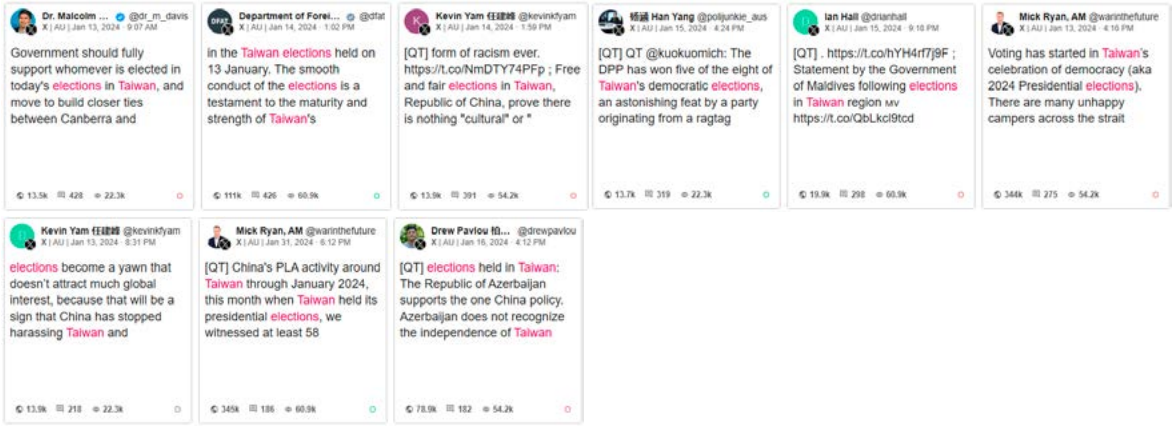


Figure 92: Top keywords and entities

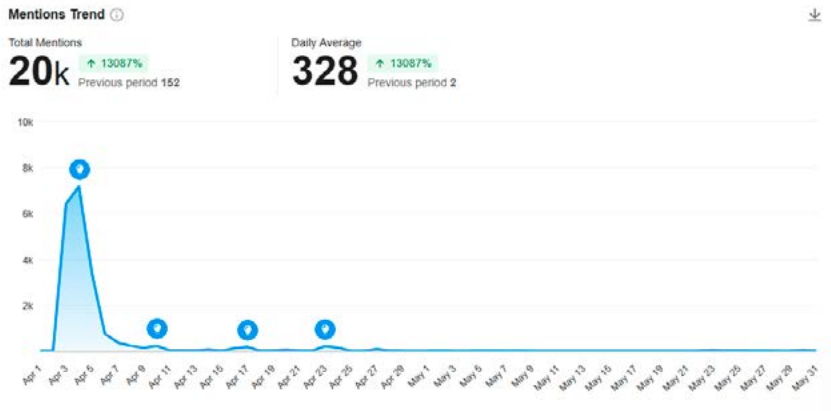


Figure 93: Top keyword sentiments

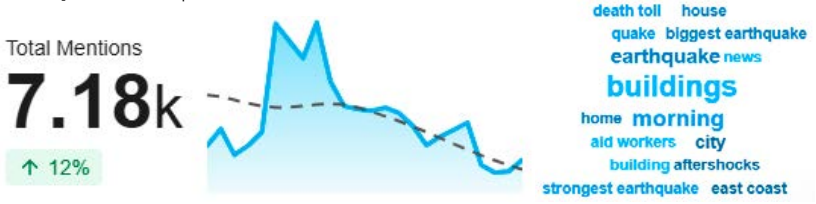


The earthquake in eastern Taiwan (April 2024)

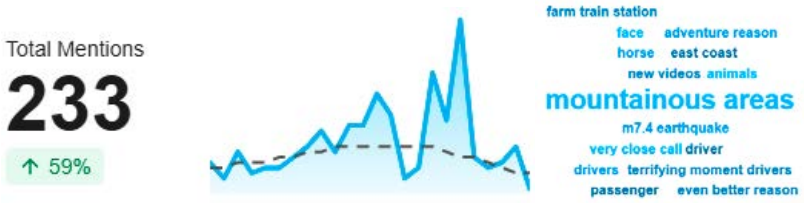
Figure 94: Mentions



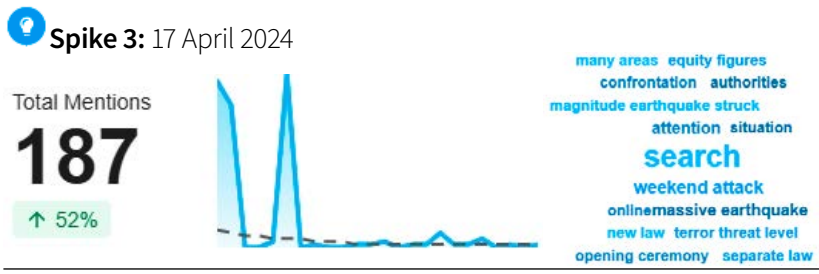
Spike 1: 4 April 2024



Spike 2: 10 April 2024



Spike 3: 17 April 2024



Spike 4: 10 April 2024

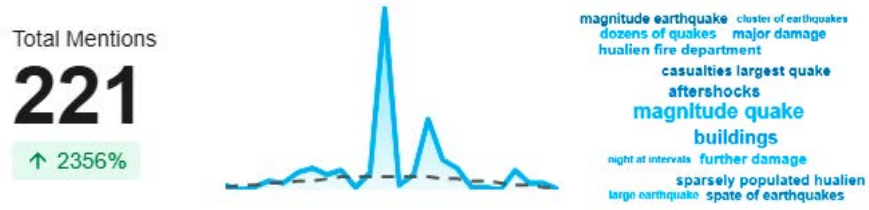


Figure 95: Most engaged content on X

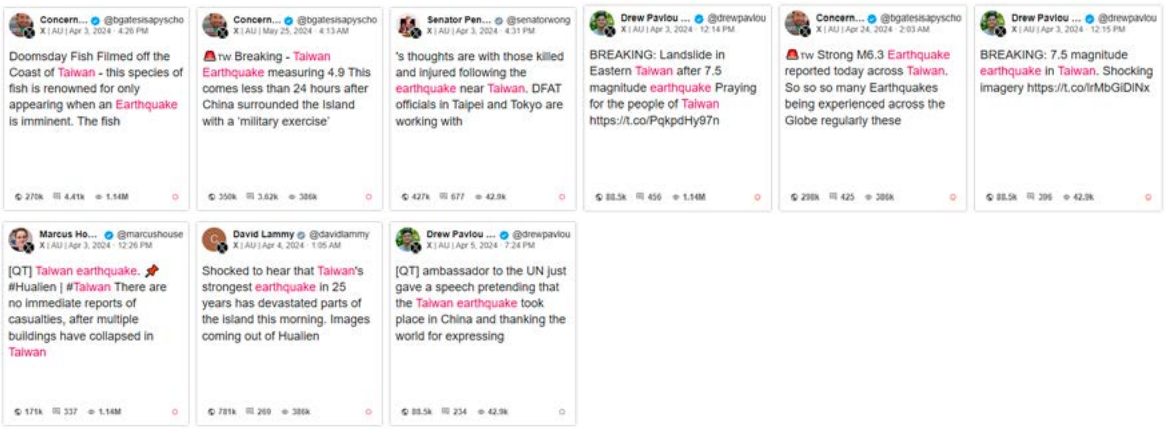


Figure 96: Top keywords and entities



Figure 97: Top keywords sentiments



The inauguration of President Lai Ching-te (20 May 2024)

Figure 98: Mentions

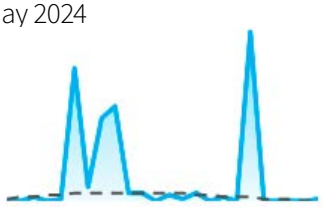


Spike 1: 16 May 2024

Total Mentions

267

↑ 1680%



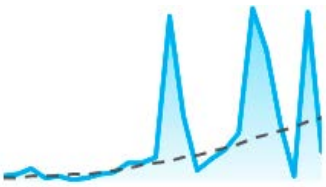


Spike 2: 20 May 2024

Total Mentions

550

↑ 1471%





Spike 3: 23 May 2024

Total Mentions

529

↑ 880%



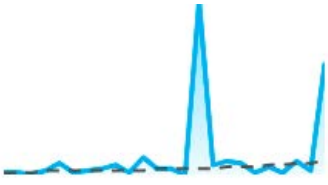


Spike 4: 26 May 2024

Total Mentions

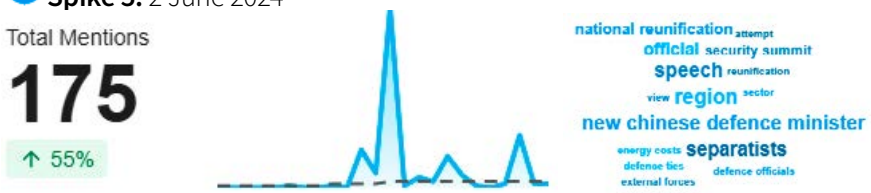
220

↑ 34%





Spike 5: 2 June 2024



Spike 6: 24 June 2024

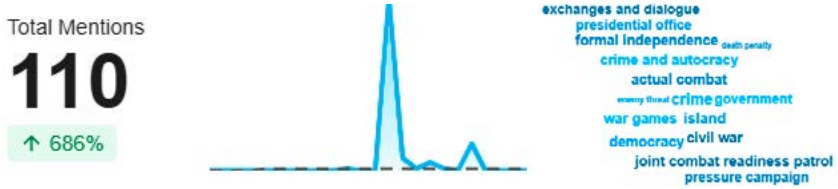


Figure 99: Most engaged content on X

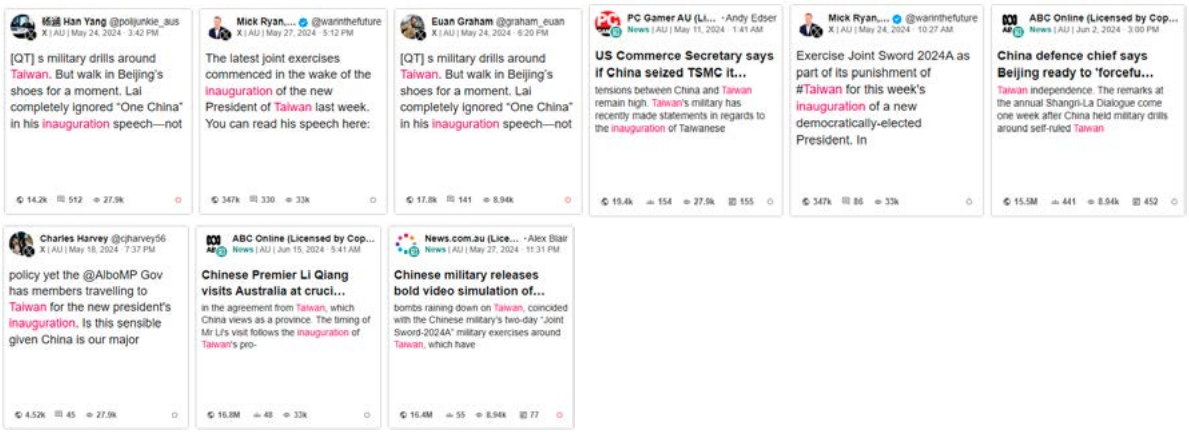


Figure 100: Top keywords and entities

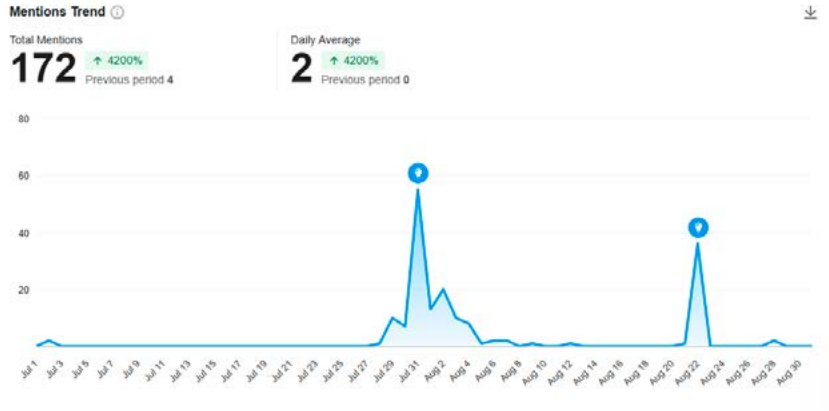


Figure 101: Top keyword sentiments

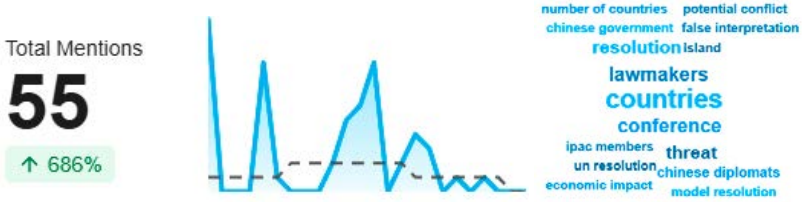


Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China Summit in Taiwan (July 2024)

Figure 102: Mentions



Spike 1: 31 July 2024



Spike 2: 22 August 2024

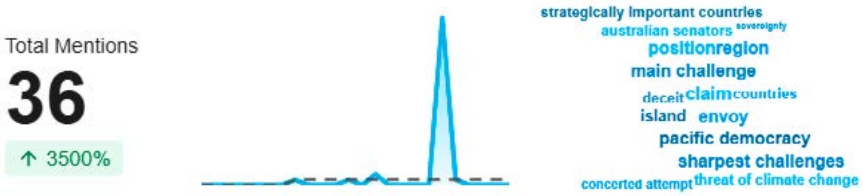


Figure 103: Most engaged content on X

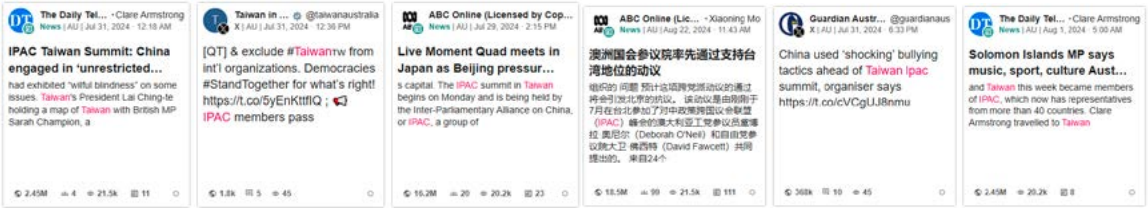


Figure 104: Top keywords and entities

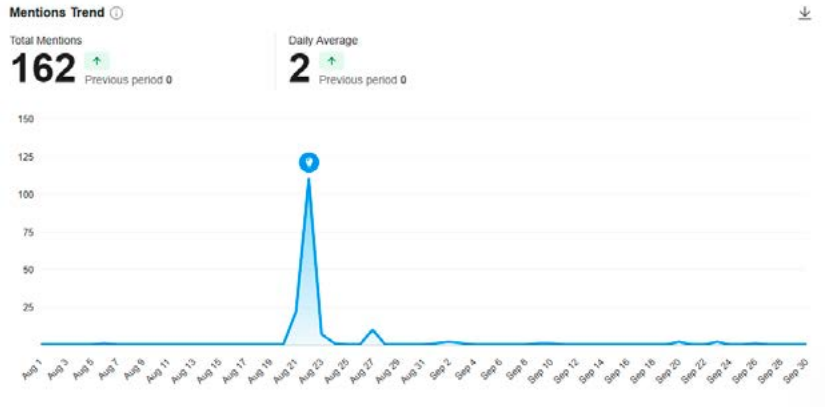


Figure 105: Top keyword sentiments



Australian Senate passes motion on UNGA Resolution 2758 (August 2024)

Figure 106: Mentions



Spike 1: 22 August 2024

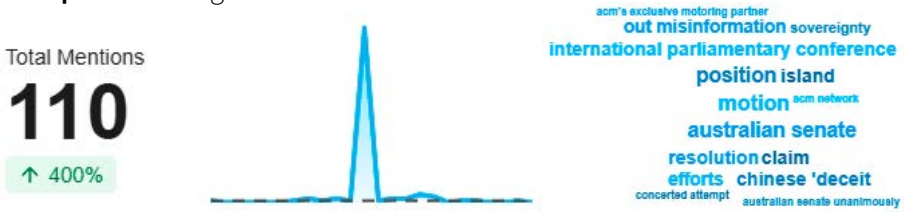


Figure 107: Most engaged content on X

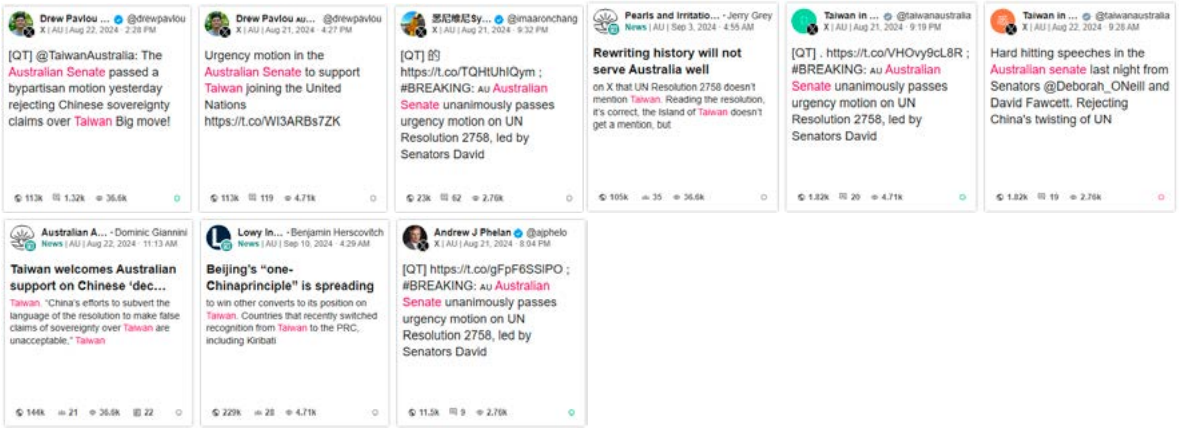


Figure 108: Top keywords and entities

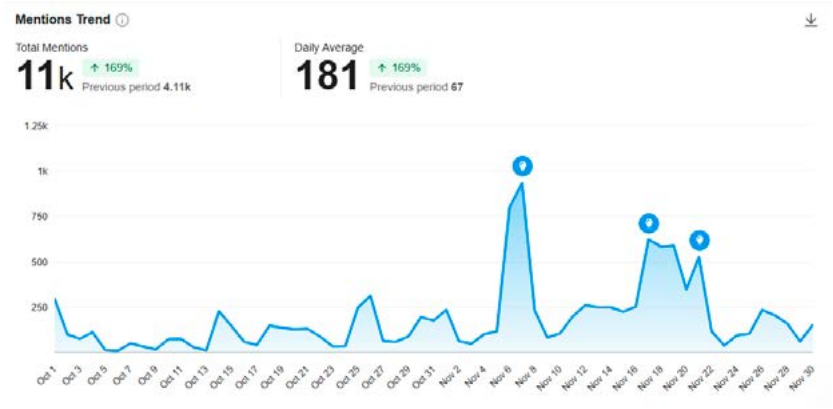


Figure 109: Top keyword sentiments

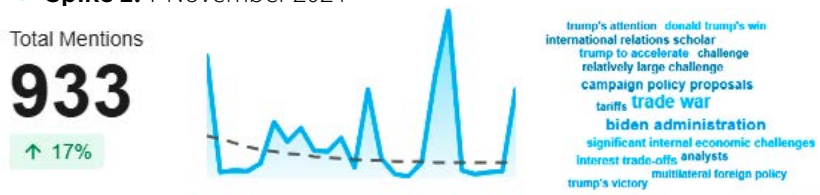


Election of Donald Trump as US President (November 2024)

Figure 110: Mentions



Spike 1: 7 November 2024



Spike 2: 17 November 2024



Spike 3: 21 November 2024

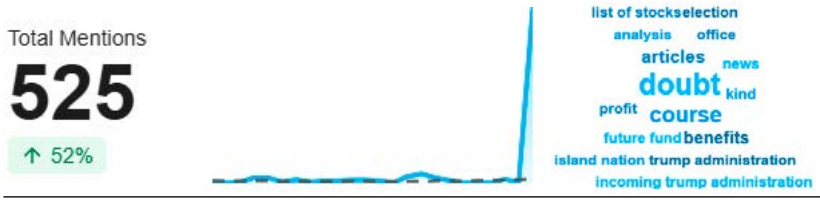


Figure 111: Most engaged content on X

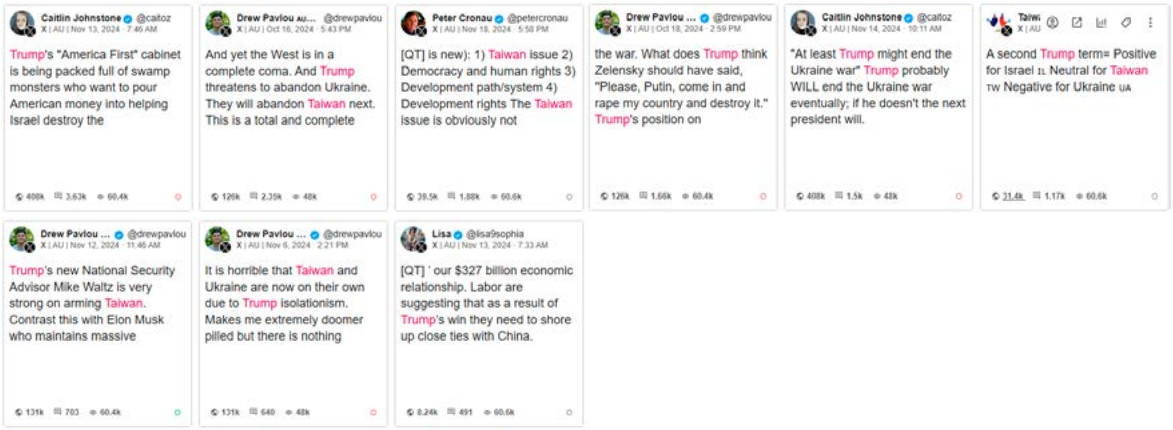


Figure 112: Top keywords and entities



Figure 113: Top keyword sentiments



Australian Financial Review Taiwan op-ed saga (January 2025)

Figure 114: Mentions

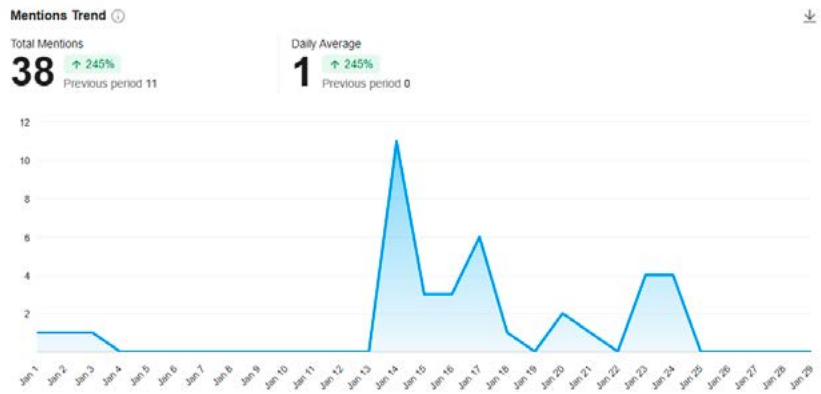


Figure 115: Most engaged content on X

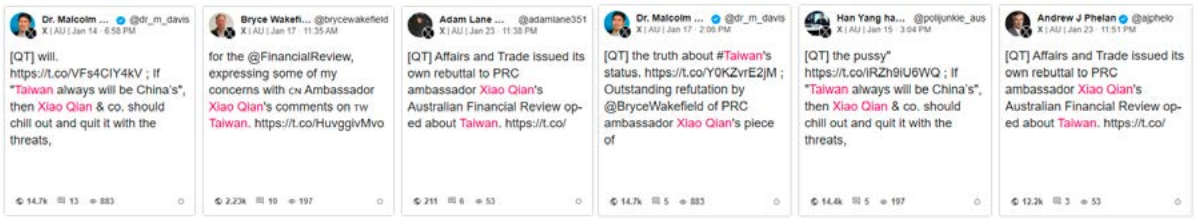


Figure 116: Top keywords and entities



Figure 117: Top keyword sentiments



Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in the (January–March) 2025 Australian information environment

Figure 118: Mentions



Largest spike: 4 March 2024

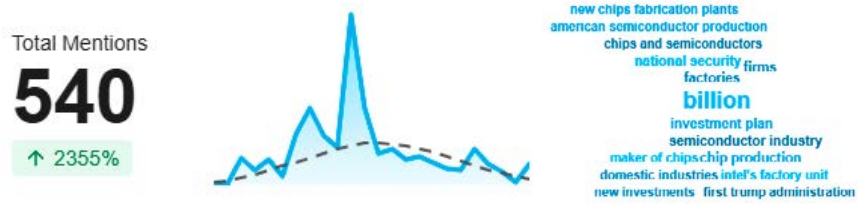


Figure 119: Most engaged content on X



Figure 120: Top keywords and entities

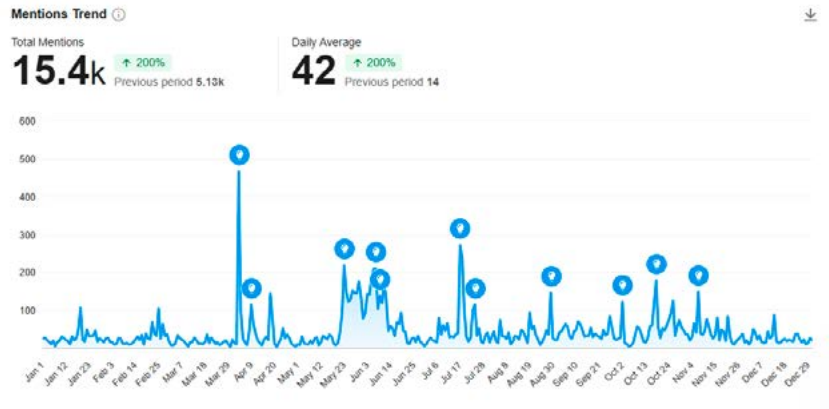


Figure 121: Top keyword sentiments

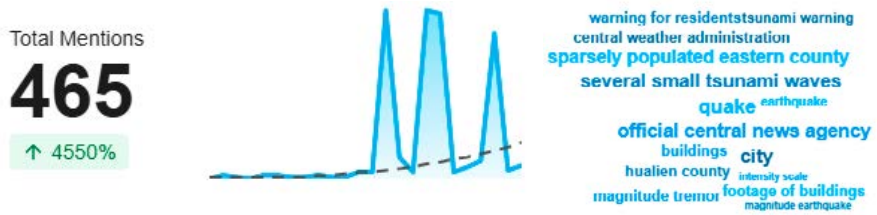


Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company in the 2024 Australian information environment

Figure 122: Mentions



Largest spike: 3 April 2024



Second largest spike: 17 July 2024

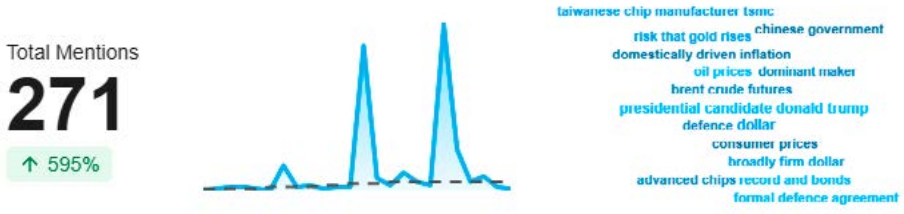


Figure 123: Most engaged content on X:



Figure 124: Top keywords and entities



Figure 125: Top keyword sentiments



US wanting a ‘Taiwan commitment’ from Australia (July 2025)

Figure 126: Mentions



Largest spike: 14 July 2024

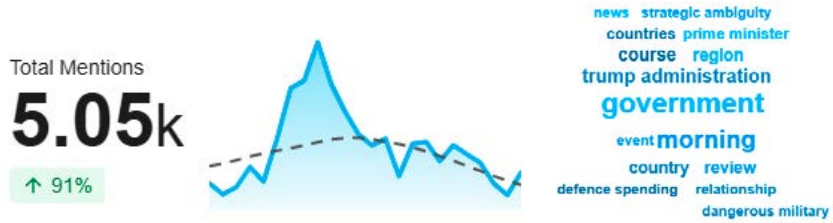


Figure 127: Most engaged content on X

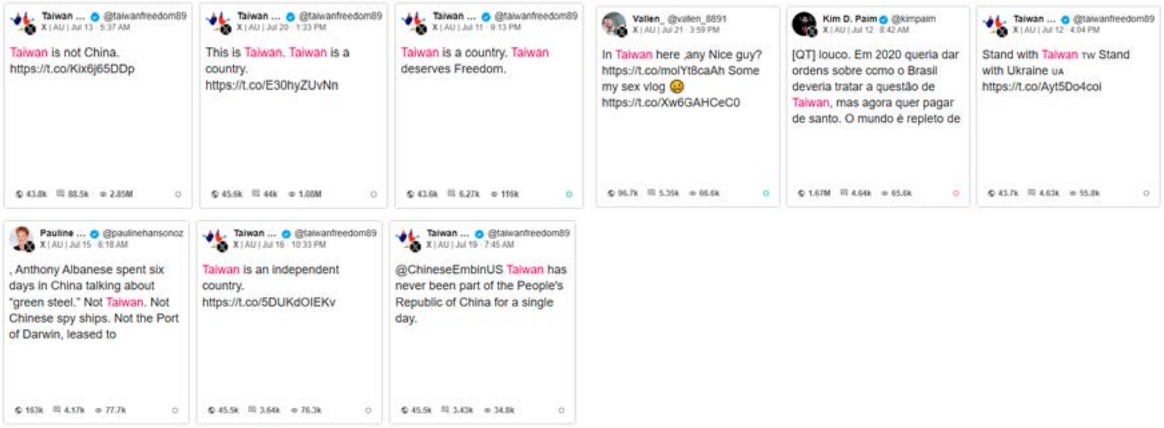
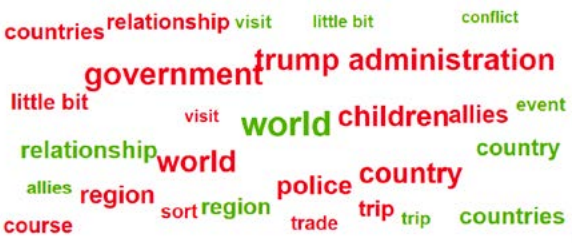


Figure 128: Top keywords and entities



Figure 129: Top keyword sentiments



Notes

1 For precision and the avoidance of doubt, this report uses the term *People's Republic of China (PRC)* throughout to identify the Chinese entity controlled by the Chinese Communist Party. It uses *Taiwan* when seeking to identify the geographic entity, the island, historically known as Formosa. It uses *Republic of China (ROC)* when seeking to identify the entity of the self-governing polity, government, economy and constitutional framework of Taiwan.

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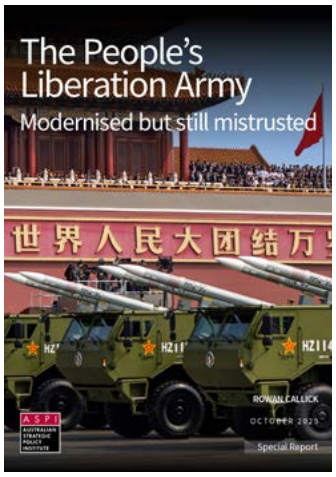
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43 Squiz Kids is a daily podcast designed for children. In August 2023, the podcast broadcast an 'audio excursion' to Taiwan. The podcast contained several distortions of Taiwan's history and current status.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AI	artificial intelligence
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
FTA	free trade agreement
GDP	gross domestic product
LNG	liquefied natural gas
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	People's Liberation Army Air Force
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
ST	*Sydney Today*
TECO	Taipei Economic and Cultural Office
UAV	uncrewed aerial vehicle

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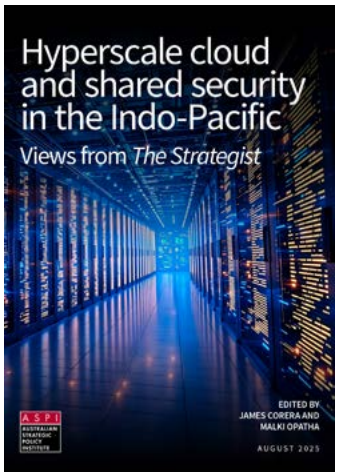






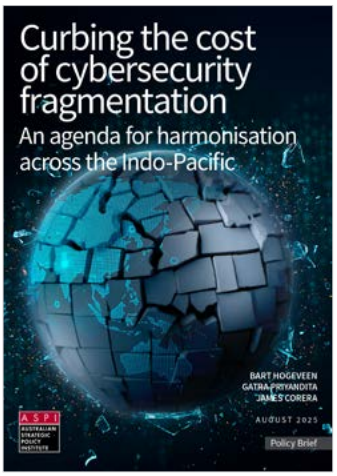












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