

General Assembly: Human Effects on the Environment

In 2022, the United Nations General Assembly stated that everyone has the “right to a healthy environment.” According to climate.gov, temperatures have warmed at an “average rate of 0.11 degrees Fahrenheit” since 1850 and tripled that rate since 1975. Climate change and the destruction of the environment are having a detrimental impact on humanity. While many policies, such as the Paris Agreement, have been enacted to lessen the effects of global warming, in the past decade there has been a sharp increase in global temperatures.

One of the biggest causes of climate change is fossil fuels. The most active fossil fuels are carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. Specifically, Nitrous Oxide can last in the air for over 109 years. Most fossil fuels are used for human activity, like transportation and the powering of homes. Between 1990 and 2015, the greenhouse gas emissions from human activities increased by 44 percent. These emissions have increased along with climate change over the past 100 years.

Equatorial countries are disproportionately affected by global warming, and those within 20 degrees from the equator have higher exposure. These countries often face rapidly rising sea levels and intense weather fluctuations. Countries with this issue include Afghanistan, South Sudan, the Philippines, Chad, Somalia, and Bangladesh.

Pollution has been rapidly growing as the economy and population continue to increase. According to the World Bank Group, “global waste is expected to increase by 3.4 billion tons by 2050.” Global waste has gotten to this, because of the dependency on materials. The supply chain increase results in more used raw materials, which increases global pollution. In addition to the supply chain, material consumption by humans factors into the large number.

Human well-being is at a greater risk because of the environment. People living in impoverished countries are at risk of diseases due to the ongoing pollution. The pollution in these areas can come from gas emissions as well as human waste. Some of the most prominent are pollution of water, air pollution, and exposure to hazardous chemicals. People living below the international poverty line have no means to protect themselves. The World Bank believes that pollution can “create harmful living conditions, and destroy ecosystems.” People have little to no access to healthy food and drinking water in their country because of poor sanitation, due to the pollution of the water systems.

In the past 25 years, there has been an increase in ice melt. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, since 2002, Greenland has lost 4 trillion metric tons of ice. 1 trillion metric tons is equivalent to 3 millimeters increased in the ocean. In just over 20 years we have increased our sea levels by 12 millimeters just from Greenland alone. Also, more than 90% of the earth's freshwater is in Greenland and Antarctica. If this rapid loss of ice sheets continues,

the world could see an increase in sea levels by an inch or two within 10 years. This would result in increased coastal flooding and rapid erosion, leading to infrastructure damage and degradation.

Some questions to consider are: What are the main environmental issues caused by human activity in your country? How has your country been affected by the rise of climate change? What steps, if any, has your country taken to reduce fossil fuel use or transition to renewable energy? What international agreements has your country joined to address environmental degradation?

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General Assembly: Emergency Response Systems

A humanitarian crisis is when a country, region or society experiences total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict. Humanitarian crises require an international response that goes beyond a mandate or the capacity of a single agency and/ or an existing United Nations humanitarian program. In 2025 alone, 305 million people are projected to require humanitarian aid globally, a significant increase from the 168 million recorded in 2020. The need for aid has been perpetuated by regional conflicts, natural disasters, and epidemic outbreaks. In those situations, a state might incur the need for financial aid, military protection, food, shelter, education, sanitation, or reconstruction of infrastructure.

An estimated 526,000 people die each year due to war. In the aftermath of the conflict, civilians often face challenges in rebuilding critical infrastructure, state-run education, and the job market. Also, individuals who live through a conflict often suffer from long-term health defects like those seen post-Nagasaki or Hiroshima. Professors from University of Oxford estimate that deaths due to indirect results of war almost double the amount of direct deaths caused by fighting.

Natural disasters are also a massive force of destruction. Natural disasters are unforeseen and often sudden events that cause great damage, destruction and suffering. The most common natural disasters include floods, storms, earthquakes, extreme temperatures, landslides, droughts, wildfires, and volcanic activity. In the last decade, over 2 billion people have been severely affected by these disasters. As of 2023, 101 countries have some form of a multi-hazard early warning system (MHEWS) in place meant to protect countries from unexpected catastrophes. Although MHEWS can aid in response time, it does not fully protect from natural disasters from happening in the first place. Countries experiencing intense natural disasters include but are not limited to Haiti, Russia, Afghanistan, Bolivia, and Japan.

Another form of emergency is emerging and re-emerging infectious disease (EID) epidemics, which are highly likely to occur in fragile and poor countries. Nations frequently lack the capacity to effectively respond to such outbreaks due to an inadequate supply of resources. In the Ebola virus disease (EVD) outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, nearly 18% of the cases originated in hospitals, leading to increased transmission and infected healthcare professionals (Schnirring 2019). This means outbreaks can be difficult to stop even when caught in time. Many countries, such as Somalia, Lesotho, Chad, South Sudan, Madagascar, and Afghanistan, struggle to provide citizens with adequate primary healthcare, which may prevent the discovery of new disease occurrences.

According to the 2021 report of the GHS Index (Global Health Security), “which measures the capacities of 195 countries to prepare for epidemics and pandemics”, every country remains severely unprepared for the hazards of future pandemics and epidemics. Many countries are also

ill-prepared for most emergencies involving both war efforts and natural disasters. Some major problems affecting worldwide emergency response systems currently include outdated technology, staffing shortages, inadequate training, and misuse of emergency lines.

Some questions to consider are: What are some recent disasters that have happened in your country? What are some emergency response systems your country already has? How prone to natural disasters is your country? Who is most affected by these emergencies in your country? What are some issues your country experiences with their emergency response systems?

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General Assembly: Elderly Aid and Care

Elderly Aid and Care is an important issue globally – in 2050, 80% of older people will be living in low and middle-income countries. Furthermore, the global population aged 65+ is expected to double from 761 million in 2021 to 1.6 billion by 2050, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). In low and middle-income countries, health systems are often unprepared for the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (like diabetes, heart disease, and dementia). Meanwhile the shortage of caregivers is severe: the WHO estimates a global shortfall of 18 million health and elderly care workers by 2030, many of them needed for elderly support. According to WHO, 1 in 6 older people also experience abuse in community settings, a figure that rises in institutions. Lack of proper systems for elderly aid boosts this problem.

Developed countries face high old-age dependency rates. Many developed countries are expected to see their dependency rates double by 2050. Developing nations might still have a large working-age population, which can boost growth. However, the aging population will reduce that advantage.

In order to protect our most loved ones, the United Nations should address this problem to ensure that the 1.4 billion people that will be aged 60+ by 2030, are taken care of. If the UN community does not address this, then elderly people can face increased risks of neglect, social isolation, poorer health outcomes, and a decreased ability to live independently. When the UN addresses this problem, we can expect to see: equity & access to elderly aid, a reduction in hospitalizations, nursing home stays, and untreated disabilities.

Internationally, the UN has taken several steps to ensure elderly aid and care through initiatives such as the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021-2030), which is led by the World Health Organization. In addition, some countries have also addressed this issue. For example, in Japan's "Fureai Kippu" time-banking system, individuals can earn credits for providing services to the elderly. when needed. Credits are often used to exchange services, and users may also transfer credits to others, allowing for mutual support and care. Everyone who earns credits in the system is a volunteer. This policy has been largely successful in Japan, and expanding creative ideas for elderly care may create a huge impact worldwide. In addition, other organizations, including NGOs and charitable organizations, are contributing solutions to help the elderly. For example, the program Meals on Wheels has served 251 million meals to elders in the United States, and they have supported over 2 million seniors. Even with all of these resources, significant gaps still exist in providing elderly aid and care, including a global shortage of care workers, uneven access to long-term care, and insufficient funding, especially in lower-income countries where populations are aging rapidly. Overall, while progress has been made through various policies and non-governmental efforts, the lack of a globally implemented effort is still a challenge.

Some ways to strengthen healthcare access for the elderly internationally can include universal healthcare coverage and person-centered care. Topics can also focus on financial security such as pension systems for the elderly, which can help during extreme poverty. In order to support this, countries can make adjustments to payroll taxes, benefit levels, and retirement ages. An example of a public system for elderly financial stability is Social Security in the United States, which provides a guaranteed source of income for the elderly. Elder abuse and neglect can still occur, even with a strong system of financial assistance. To protect against this, ideas such as federal responses to elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation can be implemented in the UN to make sure senior citizens can live in peace. For instance, the U.S. Congress passed the Elder Justice Act in 2010 to provide resources and responses to elder abuse by improving Adult Protective Services and mandating crime reporting in federally funded long-term care facilities.

Some questions for your country to consider: Why is this a global issue? What programs can we expand and build on? What parts of your country have higher rates of elderly care? What effect does this have on your economy? How can you solve this problem without funding? How will you elevate elderly care standards fairly?

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Eco/Soc: Malnutrition

Malnutrition is the “deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization.” Types of malnutrition include wasting, stunting, and underweight, inadequate vitamins or minerals, overweight, obesity, and diet-related noncommunicable diseases.

Wasting, low weight for height, occurs due to lack of food and/or infectious diseases. Stunting, low height for age, occurs because of chronic/recurrent undernutrition. Stunting typically occurs in poor socioeconomic communities and hinders a child’s ability in reaching their physical/cognitive potential. Underweight, low weight for age, is stunting, wasting, or both.

Overweight is defined as a body mass index (BMI) greater than or equal to 25 and obesity is a BMI greater than or equal to 30. This can occur when there is an “imbalance between energy consumed” and “energy expended.” Diet-related noncommunicable diseases include cardiovascular diseases, some cancers, and diabetes.

Through the World Health Organization, the UN is taking action against malnutrition through the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. This commitment by member states ensures implementation of policies, programs, and investments towards ending malnutrition. The six focuses within the plan include “creating sustainable, resilient food systems”, creating social protection and nutrition education, health systems that provide universal coverage of essential nutrition needs, trade and investment targeting better nutrition, creating safe, supportive environments, and strengthening governance and accountability. This plan is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), specifically SDG Two: Zero Hunger.

SDG Two’s main priority is to achieve zero hunger by 2030. As of now, the world is not on track to achieve this goal by the deadline due to global issues being heightened by “pandemic, conflict, climate change, and deepening inequalities” in the last decade. Due to this, food has become scarce in some areas of the world and prices for food are up leading to an estimated 600 million people worldwide will be facing hunger by 2030. This approximation only adds to the 2023 recorded 2.33 billion people facing moderate to severe food insecurity and the one billion people living with obesity.

The effects of malnutrition are felt more in developing nations due to many factors such as nutrient deficient soil, an unstable and/or corrupt government, and high rates of poverty. The leading country in malnutrition is the Democratic Republic of Congo with 23.3 million people facing extreme hunger due to 25 years of conflict and displacement. Yemen also has 17 million people facing extreme hunger due to an ongoing civil war causing prices to rise and nutritious foods to become out of reach for most people.

Questions to consider: Does malnutrition affect your country? How does malnutrition affect your country? What is your country doing to combat malnutrition? How much aid does your country rely on regarding malnutrition? Does your country not receive aid and if so, why?

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Eco/Soc: Access to Vaccinations

Health, including medical care and the right to security in the event of sickness or disability, is a defined human right in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As vaccines are necessary for not only the health of an individual but of a large population, the idea of vaccine equity is very important. The World Health Organization (WHO) focuses its approach to the issue surrounding vaccine access around the effort to get vaccines into lower income countries and communities; the WHO says that vaccine equity “means that vaccines should be allocated across all countries based on needs and regardless of their economic status.”

Every year, vaccines save approximately 4.2 million lives, protecting against diseases like diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, influenza, and measles. The most vulnerable populations are in developing or lower income countries where not as many people have access to a vaccine, decreasing the strength of herd immunity. Vaccines do not just prevent infection of a serious disease, sometimes individuals still get sick even with a vaccine, however the severity of their illness is significantly decreased. This reduces the number of fatalities and long-term effects from illness. Further, according to a study by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the deployment of vaccines during outbreaks had a dramatic effect on illnesses and mortality rates.

During the pandemic, vaccination coverage decreased in 112 countries, according to a report from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). Generally, diseases like measles and yellow fever are having a resurgence because of the decrease in vaccination coverage, which was caused by “misinformation, population growth, humanitarian crises, and funding cuts” according to an article from the United Nations. The funding crisis is specifically limiting and may cause over 15 million children to miss getting vaccinated. This has the potential to cause outbreaks and resurgences of diseases that were once thought to be under control.

Misinformation is currently a huge international concern. Vaccine hesitancy is on the rise in “52 out of the 55 countries studied,” says an article from the United Nations. Decreased confidence in vaccines is being caused by misleading information and political polarization. With misleading information on vaccines becoming more prevalent, especially online, people’s trust in vaccinations is on the decline. When a parent does not trust a vaccine/vaccines, they are very unlikely to let their child/children get vaccinated. This not only puts their child/children at risk, but primes the community for a potential outbreak of a major disease.

Some questions for your country to consider: Where does your country get its vaccines from? Does it rely on the WHO or international aid for vaccines? Does your country supply aid for vaccines? What diseases and illnesses are most common in your country? Is your country developing or lower income? How were vaccine efforts in your country affected by the pandemic? What is your country’s child mortality rate? What is the leading cause of death in your country? Is

there widespread misinformation about vaccines in your country? Are the citizens of your country informed on the importance of vaccines? Has your country had any recent outbreaks of diseases that are commonly vaccinated against?

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Eco/Soc: The Death Penalty and Extrajudicial Executions

The death penalty is defined as the punishment of execution, administered to someone legally convicted of a capital crime. The United Nations does not currently have a definition for either the death penalty or capital punishment, however they oppose both on the grounds of a violation of the rights to life and freedom as they are defined in the International Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations uses three different classifications to define a member state's position on the death penalty. First, is abolitionist or having had the death penalty abolished in both law and in practice. Second, is abolished in practice, meaning there has not been an execution in the member state in the last ten years. Third, is retentionist, or still having the death penalty in both law and in practice.

Currently, according to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), one hundred and seventy member states have either abolished the use of the death penalty or no longer practice it. Fifty-four member states still have the death penalty in both law and practice, having had an execution in the last ten years. Many retentionist states are second and third world countries; the exceptions to this are the United States and Japan. On the other hand, abolitionist states (legally and/or in practice) cannot be categorized as easily because they include many first, second, and third world countries from around the globe.

Member states that have abolished the death penalty in law and/or in practice can be further divided into "abolitionist for all crimes" and "abolitionist for ordinary crimes only." Typically states that are "abolitionist for ordinary crimes only" still use the death penalty in some cases of capital crimes. Ordinary crimes, also frequently called "common crimes" are defined as any offenses that violate the laws applied to that state or jurisdiction. Countries that are "abolitionist for ordinary crimes only" typically have exceptions for special crimes like genocide or treason or restrict the penalty to military personnel for war crimes.

The methods used by retentionist states are also a topic of conversation. According to Amnesty International, in 2024, executions were carried out by way of beheading, hanging, lethal injection, firing squad, and nitrogen anoxia. Beheading only occurred in Saudi Arabia, and nitrogen anoxia only occurred in the United States. There are many concerns about the ethics and humanity of each of these methods because of possible suffering of the condemned. Even with methods that were considered humane when first introduced, like lethal injection and nitrogen gas asphyxiation, there is evidence to suggest that they can cause immense pain. Several studies and investigations have been done on this, including "Lethal Injection: Let's Be Honest about the Death Penalty" (Lawrence Bonchek) and "Gasping For Air: Autopsies Reveal Troubling Effects Of Lethal Injection" from National Public Radio (NPR).

Extrajudicial executions are defined by the UNHRC as the “the deliberate killing of individuals outside of any legal framework.” These kinds of killings are also a concern of the UN because they represent a distinct lack of the judicial process and extreme violations of human rights. Typically people who are executed extrajudicially have critiqued the state government in some way or have involved themselves in going against the government. Journalists and revolutionaries are the most at risk of being executed in this way.

Some questions for your country to consider: What is your country’s stance on the death penalty? How recently has your country executed someone? Is your country completely abolitionist? Does your country have the death penalty for non-ordinary crimes? What crimes, if any, does your country allow to be punishable by the death penalty? Does your country have a sizable number of extrajudicial executions? Does your population support the death penalty? If your country does still have the death penalty, what is the typical method of execution? Are there any concerns about how humane it is?

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Security: Private Military Companies

For centuries, nations have supplemented their military forces with outside soldiers, historically referred to as mercenaries, contractors, or other names. In modern times, they are called Private Military Companies (PMCs), and their operation has moved beyond being footsoldiers to operating as independent units and offering strategic input or handling diplomatic assignments.

In 1977, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) banned the usage of Mercenaries and other hired soldiers at their Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism. Despite this, PMCs such as the Russian Wagner Group and American Academi (formerly called Blackwater) are still directly involved in conflicts in countries like Burkina Faso and Mali, directly violating the bans' limits.

In the past half century, the number of reported operating PMCs has increased by close to 9 times, bringing the count from roughly 125 to 1150. Beyond these numbers, there are hundreds of suspected unreported and unregulated PMCs operating worldwide. Despite this rapid growth, the only internationally recognized limitations on PMC activity are the 1977 OAU ban and the 1988 International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers, last amended in 2021. Since the implementation of these regulations, there have been numerous violations of them, yet there have been few trials. This is partly due to the issues in how laws affect PMCs. For US corporations like Academi, there are two legal documents that apply to them: the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act (MEJA) and the Uniformed Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). These documents are conflicting, leading to issues with application. This combined with the nature of PMC operations often leading to diplomatic immunity has led to many complications on regulation. These complications left incidents like the killing of Iraqi civilians by Academi in 2007 entirely untried until 2012, nearly being exempted by the statute of limitations.

The lack of restrictions on PMCs also raises concerns on national sovereignty in many of the areas where they have been deployed. Several of the larger corporations, like Wagner Group and Academi, have been used in diplomatic dealings, often acting in benefit of their home countries. The Russian Wagner Group has been a direct mouthpiece in the Ukraine conflict, acting outside of standard wartime policies. They have been parts of diplomatic envoys breaking regulation to directly engage with heads of state without consent, and bearing full armaments. These actions are direct violations of the 1961 Vienna Convention - yet there was no trial as the law was unclear on how to handle them. Additionally, in many conflicts where PMCs have been called to action, they outnumber the combined force of the belligerents. This leads to a disproportionate impact on the way the nations handle the conflicts - and the operations they undergo - and the path which they follow after the conflict.

Beyond companies directly supplying personnel, some provide services or equipment that could be cause for concern. The German company Helsing is centered around the military applications of artificial intelligence, creating fully AI operated units equipped with high power artillery. The units operate with zero human input, creating concern for a decrease in accountability and personal responsibility in conflicts.

These concerns for safety raise several questions: How is the United Nations to regulate the usage and impacts of Private Military Corporations? Should there be more UN defined codes of law and conduct, or should the existing ones be revisited? Should Private Military Corporations be outlawed? How should the military use of AI be regulated? How should these companies be treated by international law? Is there any moral right to have a personal economic stake in war? How do PMCs affect your country?

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Security: Transnational Organized Crime

Transnational organized crime (TOC) refers to profit-driven criminal conduct of an international scope where offenses span more than one nation. The most common forms include drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, money laundering, arms trafficking, counterfeit goods, wildlife trade, cultural property theft, and cybercrime. This category of crime endangers global peace and human safety, generates serious human rights abuses, and weakens the economic, social, cultural, and political development of societies worldwide. The financial impact undermines legitimate economies and directly affects governance through corruption and the “buying” of elections.

Drug trafficking remains the most insidious criminal enterprise, estimated at an annual value of \$320 billion. In 2009, the United Nations assessed the global cocaine market at \$85 billion and the opiate market at \$68 billion. Chinese crime syndicates have become central actors in the American drug epidemic through the export of precursor chemicals used to manufacture fentanyl and methamphetamine. These substances are shipped to Mexico, where cartels convert them into finished drugs before transporting them across the southern U.S. border. This lucrative collaboration has escalated the fentanyl trade, which is now the primary cause of overdose deaths in the United States. At the same time, Hezbollah has established chapters in Latin America, particularly in Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil. The organization has engaged in narcotics trafficking and large-scale money laundering operations. An emerging trend reveals that terrorist groups exploit organized criminal networks both to advance radical politics and to finance extremist movements.

Human trafficking represents a crime in which men, women, and children are treated as commodities for sexual or labor exploitation. In 2005, the International Labour Organization estimated there were around 2.4 million trafficking victims at any given time, with profits amounting to \$32 billion annually. However, recent data indicates the problem is significantly larger. In Europe alone, 140,000 women and children are trafficked at any one time for sexual exploitation, producing \$3 billion a year, with a steady inflow of 70,000 new victims.

Migrant smuggling operates as a structured business that moves people across borders through organized networks and clandestine routes. Criminal groups offer migrants a “smuggling package,” and the treatment they receive corresponds to the fee they can afford. Along the journey, their rights are frequently violated: many are robbed, raped, beaten, held hostage, or left to die when conditions become too dangerous. This trade generates billions of dollars annually. In 2009, an estimated \$6.6 billion was made from the trafficking of 3 million migrants from Latin America to North America. In 2008, an estimated \$150 million was made from the smuggling of ~55,000 migrants from Africa to Europe.

Illicit arms trafficking generates between \$170 million and \$320 million each year and funnels handguns and assault weapons into the possession of criminals, militias, and gangs. The true number of victims is difficult to measure, but in certain regions there is a clear correlation between homicide rates and the proportion of killings committed with firearms.

Natural resource trafficking involves the illegal movement of raw materials such as diamonds and rare metals, often originating in conflict zones. Timber trafficking in Southeast Asia alone brings in \$3.5 billion annually. Beyond enriching criminal organizations, this activity contributes to deforestation, environmental degradation, and rural poverty.

The illegal wildlife trade is another profitable venture for organized groups, with poachers targeting skins and body parts for foreign buyers. The trade in elephant ivory, rhino horn, and tiger parts from Africa and Southeast Asia to Asian markets produces \$75 million annually and threatens the survival of several species. Organized groups also traffic rare plants and live animals, sometimes dangerous to human health, to satisfy collectors or unsuspecting consumers. Each year, traffickers move over 100 million tons of fish, 1.5 million live birds, and 440,000 tons of medicinal plants.

The circulation of fraudulent medicines is an escalating problem, valued at \$1.6 billion. These counterfeit drugs, trafficked largely from Asia into Southeast Asia and Africa, pose grave risks, with the potential of death or resistance to treatments for diseases like malaria and tuberculosis. Alongside conventional trafficking methods, criminals also exploit online channels, creating health crises in both developing and developed nations.

Cybercrime spans multiple areas, but one of the most lucrative is identity theft, estimated to produce \$1 billion annually. Criminals increasingly use the Internet to steal personal data, hack financial accounts, and illegally obtain credit card information.

Possible responses to these threats include coordinated international efforts to better identify, investigate, and prosecute the individuals and groups involved. Citizens must also become more aware of how organized crime impacts daily life and raise concerns with policymakers to ensure the issue is treated as a top priority. Consumers play a critical role by purchasing responsibly and avoiding products that feed criminal markets. Traditional justice systems and ordinary policing often fail against powerful networks, which is why states must invest in specialized units equipped with advanced technology. Developing nations will require assistance in building their capacity to resist organized crime.

Confronting a phenomenon as vast as transnational organized crime requires collective partnerships among governments, businesses, civil society, international institutions, and individuals across the globe.

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Security: Taiwan-China: Taiwan Strait

The Taiwan Strait, a roughly 180 km channel linking the South China Sea and East China Sea, is one of the world's busiest and most contested waterways. It lies over the Asian continental shelf and carries heavy river sediments, forming rich fishing grounds. The Taiwan Strait is a major global shipping corridor, and about 44% of the world's container fleet transits the strait annually. Taiwan and China both depend on these lanes, but Taipei promotes free international navigation while Beijing asserts full sovereignty. China maintains its sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction over the Taiwan Strait, calling any claim of international status a false claim. Taiwan's government flatly rejects Beijing's view calling China's claims "fallacy," noting the strait is "by no means China's inland sea."

Taiwan's leaders stress that Taiwan's future must be decided by its people, and they dispute Beijing's legal claims. In US-China diplomatic exchanges, Taipei has criticized China's assertions as baseless, and the U.S. has publicly rebuffed Beijing by affirming the strait's international status. Thus, international law has become a key arena for this dispute. In short, while China's official stance is with Taiwan as part of China, most other states view the strait itself as open waters, even as they navigate the sensitivities of Chinese pressure.

China is Taiwan's largest trading partner, and Taiwan ranks high among China's partners. In 2024 Taiwan was China's 4th-largest trading partner with about \$293 billion in two-way trade. Cross-strait commerce includes billions in chips, electronics, machinery and consumer goods. Notably, Taiwan dominates the global semiconductor industry. Taiwanese firms manufacture around 68% of the world's advanced semiconductors, including ~90% of the most cutting-edge chips. Mainland China relies heavily on these imports. In fact, China imports over \$400 billion of semiconductors annually, far outstripping its own production. Any disruption to Taiwan's chip output from conflict or blockade would ripple through global tech supply chains.

Taiwan also exploits maritime resources in the strait. Taiwan imports most of its fossil fuels (about 88% of oil/gas), but it is rapidly building wind farms in the Taiwan Strait to boost renewable power.. These wind farms have created some local disputes, but they illustrate Taiwan's focus on energy security amid cross-strait risk.

An emerging issue in this region is seabed mining. Under international law, deep-sea mineral resources beyond national jurisdiction fall under the International Seabed Authority. In the Pacific and beyond, China leads the race for undersea minerals, having obtained five exploration contracts for polymetallic nodules, a source critical for batteries.

The Taiwan Strait, being on continental shelf, is part of the broader South China Sea and Pacific Sea. Any future push to mine cobalt, nickel, copper or rare earths on the ocean floor could escalate disputes, since multiple claimants including China, Malaysia, and the Philippines

contest seabed rights here. Moreover, deep-sea mining poses serious ecological risks. Extraction machines can blast away entire seabed habitats and create sediment plumes that smother marine life.

Politically and militarily, Beijing has intensified pressure on Taiwan in recent years. President Xi Jinping's rhetoric has been increasingly strident. In late 2023 he declared that Taiwan's "reunification with the motherland is a historical inevitability." Official Chinese media routinely refers to Taiwan's leaders as separatists, demanding they accept one-China or face consequences. Importantly, Xi's government has not ruled out force. He has famously "never renounced the use of force" to achieve reunification. In fact, Chinese military planners have set 2027 as a deadline to be ready for an invasion if needed. On the operational side, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has repeatedly rehearsed Taiwan scenarios. U.S. officials report that PLA exercises in 2022–23 have simulated naval blockades, amphibious landings and air attacks aimed at the island. Taiwan's air defense zone and surrounding seas now see near-daily Chinese incursions, which keeps regional militaries on edge.

All these factors feed into broader regional risks. A military clash over Taiwan would not stay local. The U.S., Japan, and others have made clear that a forceful Chinese takeover of Taiwan would trigger major responses. U.S. strategy openly favors flying, sailing and operating in the strait under international law. Japan and Australia have bolstered security ties with Taiwan and its neighbors in reaction to Chinese pressure. The stakes of any conflict would be enormous. Military analysts warn that war in the Taiwan Strait would devastate global trade: maritime chokepoints would be blocked and economies shuttered.

On one hand, China speaks of sovereignty and reunification; on the other hand, the international community insists on navigation rights and peaceful resolution. Taiwan's own pursuit of energy, environmental protection, and high-tech trade further complicate the picture. Until a durable political settlement is found, resolving the Strait's challenges will require respect for international law, deterrence of aggression, and recognition of the complicated economic realities. In the meantime, all parties from Beijing to Taipei to Washington and beyond publicly say they want stability. How that precarious balance holds in the coming years will be critical for regional and world security.

[China Leads the Race to the Bottom: Deep Sea Mining for Critical Minerals | New Security Beat](#)
[Will China's Reliance on Taiwanese Chips Prevent a War? | Council on Foreign Relations](#)

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[Chinese military practiced Taiwan invasion manoeuvres in 2023, says US general | Reuters](#)

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[China's Taiwan Policy in 2023 | The Heritage Foundation](#)

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