

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's threat that he would fire four missiles toward the US territory of Guam has been splashed across the world's media. Meanwhile, Taiwan is being threatened by Chinese fighter jets, which have in recent weeks and months made repeated flights off the nation's east coast.

Both stories have been presented in a similar fashion: Pyongyang threatens Guam with a possible attack; Beijing threatens Taiwan with invasion. The underlying message is that the people of Taiwan and Guam are brothers in arms, under siege by aggressor nations.

Many in Taiwan have until now failed to notice that the nation in fact has many geographical, cultural and historical ties with Guam. After all, the two have been closely linked to one another for a long time.

Taiwanese should therefore pay closer attention to Guam, and place a greater value on the ties that connect the two.

First, geography. Taiwan and Guam are both island nations in the western Pacific Ocean. As the Summer Universiade's English-language promotional material declares: "Chinese Taipei [sic] is long and narrow" — so too is the island of Guam. Furthermore, the northern part of each island inclines eastward, as if both islands wish to keep their distance from China.

Second, culture. The Aborigines of Taiwan and Guam share a common ancestry; their clothing, ornaments and dances are remarkably similar. This is because they are Austronesians who did not begin to mix with foreign migrants until the 17th century.

Third, history. The first sovereign country to rule Guam was Spain. The island was ceded to the US at the end of the Spanish-American War as an unincorporated US territory.

The first sovereign nation to rule Taiwan was also a Western country: The Netherlands. In 1662, Ming Dynasty general Cheng Cheng-kung (鄭成功), also known as Koxinga, defeated the

Dutch.

Then, in 1683 Taiwan was annexed by the Qing Dynasty and became a colony of China. Following the Qing Dynasty's capitulation to Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan and its outlying islands were ceded to Japan, who administered Taiwan as a colony until its own defeat at the end of World War II.

In 1951, Japan signed the San Francisco Treaty, which forced it to relinquish control of Taiwan, including Penghu and the South China Sea Islands.

The treaty did not specify which, if any, nation should be given sovereignty over Taiwan and the outlying islands, although the US, the main victor of World War II, was the dominant party at the negotiations. This is the legal basis for US President Donald Trump saying "our one China policy."

Washington's position is that the US does not recognize that Taiwan belongs to China, nor does it recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation.

However, the US has at the same time written into law the Taiwan Relations Act, which sets out the legal basis for Taipei's relationship with Washington.

At the end of the Spanish-American Civil War the US obtained Guam as a spoil of war. Following victory in two world wars, the one "prize" claimed by the US was to have primary say over Taiwan's sovereignty. In this respect, Taiwan's and Guam's relationships with the US are rather similar.

Fourth, military matters. Today, Taiwan and Guam are inextricably linked. Guam forms a second line of defense for the US. If North Korea were to attack the island, its missiles must first pass through Japanese airspace. The Japanese archipelago is therefore Guam's first line of defense.

Guam, Taiwan's brother in arms

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟

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If China were to attack Guam, its missiles must first pass through Taiwan's airspace, making Taiwan Guam's first line of defense against an attack from China — and China is Guam's true enemy, not North Korea.

Seen from this perspective, Taiwan is even more important to the security and safety of Guam than Japan.

As any well-informed person knows, the truth behind the whirlwind created by Pyongyang is that, behind the scenes, Beijing is stirring up trouble.

In 1950, when the Korean War broke out, then-US president Harry Truman immediately pointed the finger at China and dispatched the US Navy's Seventh Fleet to protect Taiwan.

By the same logic, North Korea's threat to fire missiles toward Guam once again awakened Washington to the fact that Taiwan's de facto sovereignty must be protected under the US security umbrella.

The reality is that, if the US loses Taiwan, it will be shut out of the whole Asian region and the entire Pacific Ocean.

The Guam crisis might well be a turning point for Taiwan. It is of vital importance that Taiwan immediately musters all of its soft power to declare to the world that "Taiwan belongs to Taiwan, and has never been a part of China."

The government must act boldly to fend off Beijing's rapacious designs on Taiwan.

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