



**(U) This infographic describes the China's "Island Chain" strategy.** Island Chain Strategy was formulated in 1951 by John Foster Dulles, a visionary foreign affairs expert who enumerated the need to contain the erstwhile USSR and China with a string of naval bases in the western Pacific region to restrict sea access to these two countries. This strategy did not gain much traction during the Cold War but after the USSR broke up into 15 countries on December 26, 1991, the Island Chain Strategy gained momentum to contain China, whose growing economic prowess and its desire for hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region was no open secret. US government reports describe Chinese-conceived "island chains" in the Western Pacific as narrow demarcations for Chinese "counter-intervention" operations to defeat US and allied forces in altercations over contested territorial claims. For the United States, the island chain strategy is a significant part of the force projection of the U.S. military in the Far East. For China, the concept is integral to its maritime security and fears of strategic encirclement by U.S. armed forces. For both sides, the island chain strategy emphasizes the geographical and strategic importance of Taiwan.

**First Island Chain**



The First Island Chain is defined as the chain of islands that begins at the Kuril Islands, runs through the Japanese archipelago, the Ryukyu Islands and Taiwan, the northwestern portion of the Philippines (particularly Luzon, Mindoro and Palawan) and finishes towards Borneo, and used to extend to the Spratly Island and the southern Vietnamese coast prior to the Vietnam War. The chain also serves as the maritime boundaries between the East China Sea and the Philippine Sea, and the South China Sea and the Sulu Sea.

The midpoint and key part of the first chain was – and still is — Taiwan. Because the island chain is composed of a series of landmasses, it is also called the "unsinkable aircraft carrier", especially in reference to Taiwan.

**Second Island Chain**



The Second Island Chain can refer to two different interpretations, but the version most commonly used refers to the island chain which is formed by Japan's Bonin Islands and Volcano Islands, in addition to the Mariana Islands (most notably

Guam, an unincorporated American overseas territory with a heavily fortified military base), western Caroline Islands (Yap and Palau), and extends to Western New Guinea.[1] The chain serves as the eastern maritime boundary of the Philippine Sea.

As it is located within the middle portion of the West Pacific, it acts as a second strategic defense line for the United States

**Third Island Chain**



The Third Island Chain is the final part of the strategy. This island chain begins at the Aleutian Islands and runs south across the center of the Pacific Ocean towards Oceania, through the Hawaiian Islands, American Samoa and Fiji, to reach New Zealand.[1] Australia serves as the staple between the second and third chains.

**Proposed Forth & Fifth Island Chain**

**China's Strategic Vision**

Demarcations of China's growing naval presence in the Indo-Pacific

Existing island chain\* Proposed Port controlled by ● China ● U.S. ● U.K.



Source: Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative  
\*Island chain is a security concept for a strategic perimeter of islands and larger land masses. BloombergOpinion

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, argues that a fourth and a fifth island chain should be added to an overall understanding of Chinese maritime strategy in the Indo-Pacific. Whereas the first three island chains are located in the Pacific Ocean, these two newly proposed ones are in the Indian Ocean, which would reflect the growing Chinese interest in the region.

The proposed fourth chain would include places like Lakshadweep, the Maldives and Diego Garcia to disrupt the String of Pearls waypoints towards the Persian Gulf such as the

Gwadar Port and Hambantota; while the proposed fifth chain would originate from Camp Lemonnier in the Gulf of Aden, around the Horn of Africa and along the entire East African coastline through the Mozambique Channel (between Mozambique and Madagascar, including the Comoro Islands) towards South Africa, to encircle the Chinese naval base at Doraleh, Djibouti and sabotage China's trade with Africa

Sources:

- <https://www.financialexpress.com/business/defence-island-chain-strategy-steps-to-checkmate-china-2565232/>
- <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/china-influence-pacific/>
- <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1002513.pdf>