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Conceptualizing East Asian ‘Enemy-Shore Islands’

The Cases of the Five West Sea Islands of South Korea and the Kinmen and Matsu Islands of Taiwan

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Abstract

This thesis conceptualizes the Five West Sea Islands (FWI) of South Korea, and Kinmen and Matsu Islands (Kinma) of Taiwan as enemy-shore islands. Enemy-shore islands are border islands that are located offshore of their authoritative country, but onshore of an enemy-country. On one hand, these islands are utilized by the central government to help govern the enemy-border as well as national security. On the other hand, though, enemy-shore islands are an entity that essentially shapes these governance practices and the enemy-relation between the two countries. This kind of duality is the central claim of this thesis. Such a duality causes an inherent policy dilemma for policymakers. At the same time, enemy-shore island policies like militarization, development, restrictions and cross-border cooperation must have aspects to them that enhance the utilization of enemy-shore islands in maintaining governance practices, while the same policies also should protect the islands and compensate their residents. Moreover, this thesis proposes that the imposing of these policies partially shape the realities and trajectories of the enemy-shore islands and their residents.

Keywords: South Korea, Taiwan, conceptualization, border regions, enemy-shore island

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1 Introduction

In South Korea, a set of five islands in the West Sea, the “Five West Sea Islands” (서해 5도 [seohaeodo]¹), which are located in the close proximity of the coast of North Korea, have been described in the media as the most dangerous area in the country. Indeed, the Five West Sea Islands (hereon, FWI) region has hosted a number of fatal conflicts involving the North and South Korean militaries in the 21st century but it has also been central to some largely failed attempts of cooperation and peace.



Figure 1. Five West Sea Islands. (Map made by author from a free SVG map).

In Taiwan, the two archipelagos of Kinmen (金門 [jinmen]) and Matsu (馬祖 [mazu]) share similar geographic circumstances to that of the FWI in South Korea. Kinmen and

¹ Use of transliteration is explained in Chapter 2.2.

Matsu (hereon, Kinma) belong to the authority of Taiwan but are located at the coast of China, some 300 kilometres away from the Taiwan main island. While mutual bombardment in the area ceased, so-called grey zone operations have arisen in turn. Since the start of the 21st century, unique cooperation efforts between Taiwan and mainland China have taken place in the islands.



Figure 2. Kinmen and Matsu Islands. (Map made by author from a free SVG map).

The similar geographic positioning of the FWI and Kinma emerged via a reminiscently similar path of events in the mid-1900s. The peripheral coastal islands were caught right in the middle of the developments of contested border figurations of the newly divided two Chinas and two Koreas. China split into two countries as a result of a civil

war, while in Korea a United States–Soviet Union orchestrated division triggered a war that established the peninsula into South and North. The FWI and Kinma had suddenly become new borderland and central to the interests of the new regimes in both domestic and international political spheres.

The FWI and Kinma's new geopolitical positionings and roles in the inter-Korean and inter-Chinese disputes further developed during the Cold War when ideological polarization and enmity across the borders continued to heighten. The respective authoritative leaders of the Chinas and Koreas formed ideas on how the islands can be utilized in the inter-Chinese and inter-Korean conflict and competition as well as in establishing and legitimizing their own rule domestically. This makes the FWI and Kinma something more complex than simply just geographically defined groups. To this day, when active war has mostly stopped and the divisions have largely established into separate legitimate states, the island still cannot completely escape of their origins.

I see that this is an essential part of the development of how the FWI and Kinma developed into what I call "enemy-shore islands". The main task of this study is to conceptualize this terminology. Enemy-shore islands as a concept base not only on the geographic circumstances that the FWI and Kinma share, but also on the enemy-relationship that in Korea and China formed through the respective divisions of the countries and the newly emerged "accidental borders", as presented in Chu & Hsu (2024).

These islands emerged as borderland that cannot detach themselves from the border that holds various important functions from the perspective of the state and the government. I argue that on top of this idea of functionality, that is highlighted for example by Blanchard (2005), there are certain features to enemy-shore islands that negatively affect state-making and security. For the functionality to work, these issues have to be addressed through policy. In this sense, these "enemy-shore island policies" have to engage the islands' duality in that they are functional as borderland but also weaknesses for the legitimacy and security of the state.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How can the FWI and Kinma be categorized and studied together under the concept of “enemy-shore islands”?
2. What type of policies are commonly applied to enemy-shore islands, and why?
3. How do these policies constitute to the diverging trajectories of enemy-shore islands?

This thesis is divided into two parts. The first part conceptualizes the FWI and Kinma as enemy-shore islands through the understanding of historical background and theoretical considerations regarding the islands. In the second part I examine enemy-shore island policy and theorize how policy decisions regarding these islands affect their diverging trajectories as enemy-shore islands.

1.1 Literature Review

There are many aspects of the FWI and Kinma that have been studied rather extensively within the past decades such as their emerging and evolving as geopolitical spaces, human right situations and other legal questions as well as military conflicts in the regions. Yet, there seem to be no studies that group the islands with one another to exclusively study them together. According to reviewing of previous literature as expanded on below, notions of similarities between the FWI and Kinma is limited to rather superficial or brief mentions in studies that focus on just one or the other island group specifically. This contributes to an apparent research gap.

When it comes to the FWI region, a notable topic of research concerns the issue of legitimacy regarding the Northern Limit Line (hereon, NLL), which is a contested maritime boundary line between North and South Korea near the FWI. The NLL was set unilaterally by the South Korea side, namely by the United States, after the Korean War in 1953. While South Korea has since been enforcing the NLL as a maritime border between North and South, North Korea refuses its legitimacy. Studies note that it is difficult (e.g. Choi & Kim, 2004; Roehrig, 2009; Yea, 2022) but not impossible (Kim, 2019) to claim the NLL legitimate according to current international law regarding maritime borders and territories above other factors. Nonetheless, the land of the FWI

itself is not a contested territory and it is easy to conclude the FWI's legitimacy as South Korean territory due to that it was mutually agreed on in The Korean War Armistice Agreement (1953).

While the case of the NLL itself is not a subject of this study, its uncertainty as a maritime border does cause many considerable issues in the FWI like illegal fishing (Choi & Kim, 2004; Song, 2015) and difficulty and strictening of governance practices (Song, 2015) which has affected local fishing industry and livelihood. Those concerns have in turn caused an influx in questioning the state of human rights in the islands (e.g. Lee, 2022) which has recently been one of the popular research topics when it comes to the FWI.

What is especially relevant from the perspective of this study are the studies regarding the nature of how the FWI emerged and evolved into the militarized and strictly governed place that it is today. For example, a study by Chun et al (2021) concentrates on how the concept of the FWI was constructed in the 1970s for political purposes of the regime at the time. In this construction, the FWI was painted a space that was threatened by North Korea in order legitimate and justify the military governance and use of force by the authoritarian administration of President Park Chung-hee in the 1970s. Kang (2022) points out that such discourse did not limit to just one course, but that newspapers described the FWI in various ways to build this picture of a threatened space.

Although Kinma has not experienced similar contestation regarding a maritime border, nevertheless, the framing of "accidental border" (Chu & Hsu, 2024) paints a picture of intentional border-making efforts in Kinma too which paints a similar idea of a constructivist background. During Kinma's time under War Zone Administration (WZA), after it emerged as a new borderland but also a frontline as the endgame of the Chinese civil war, it has been utilized by the central governments, especially authoritarian president Chiang Kai-shek.

Life in Kinma during the strict and militarized WZA period has justifiably sparked academic interest in fields like anthropology (e.g. Lin, 2021) and human rights. That is likely amplified by the echoes of Cold War of that the United States presence in the

region is a symbol to this day. This is a common factor in the study of other militarized islands like Okinawa and Guam as well (Davis et al, 2020).

Many studies confirm that after the WZA ended, there was another transformation, or a “radical shift” (Gandil, 2025, p.1), in Kinma’s significance and purpose to Taiwan as the islands started to demilitarize and Kinma became a gate to China instead of a boundary against it (e.g. Baldacchino & Tsai, 2014; Gandil, 2025). Such notions present a picture where Kinma’s recent developments are diverging significantly from those of the FWI. It offers an incredibly interesting basis for a study on why and how these diverging paths emerged in the past couple of decades.

2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this thesis. This is a qualitative theoretical study that is based on the method of conceptualization. Moreover, this study uses categorization to examine enemy-shore island policies in Chapter 5. Evaluation of the methodology of conceptualization and this study overall is discussed in Chapter 6.

2.1 Conceptualization

Conceptualization in social sciences is a method, where new concept, an abstract idea or a mental image that helps organize and describe reality, is created or an existing concept is re-evaluated and re-defined (Munck et al, 2020). I utilize conceptualizing to form an abstract idea, a concept, using the term 'enemy-shore islands', that shall help explain certain phenomena that can be observed regarding these islands.

While there are hardly any set rules to concept formation, and it could even be described as "largely an art" (Munck et al, 2020, p. 332), a beginner researcher should have a guideline to lean onto to make the research successful and justifiable. Munck et al (2020, p. 332) claim that it is the product, the concept itself, that is assessable in cases where nothing else in the conceptualization process is. For that reason, I provide the reader with an understanding of what constitutes a good concept. In the last chapter of this thesis, the concept of enemy-shore islands is evaluated according to the following criteria for the sake of transparent practice.

Munck et al. (2020, p. 336) suggest that for a concept to be intelligible at the very least the following questions should be answered:

- What is the concept designed by the term or symbol used for?
- What are the conceptual attributes?
- What is the structure of the concept i.e. what are the relationships among conceptual attributes?
- What is the reference of a concept?

Thus, a concept is not only a description of its meaning or a list of its attributes. It also pivotally contains the relationship between its attributes as well as with its external conceptual references. This suggests that concepts are often conceptual systems with vertical and horizontal relationships between attributes, as described by Munck et al (2020, p. 334), for example. The fact that a concept includes certain attributes also suggests that other attributes are excluded. In this thesis, the excluded attributes are at some points vocalized for the sake of clarity, although it is often not necessary to do so.

Moreover, the “concept's reference (aka the domain of a concept) is all objects to which a concept refers and is thus related to the unit of analysis of a study” (Munck et al, 2020, p. 333). The conceptual references locate the concept among other concepts within the field. The investigation of the conceptual attributes and references provides evidence that the new concept is not just a novel name for an idea that already exists under different terminology (Davidson, 1973, p. 10–11). This is why it is crucial that I examine my concept of enemy-shore islands in reference to related terminology such as “border islands”.

In Chapter 5, I use categories to group together and examine different types of policies related to the governance of enemy-shore islands. Finally, the construction of this conceptualization of the FWI and Kinma as enemy-shore islands has developed through reviewing previous literature on the topic and developing an abstract thought process that leans on logicalities of theories regarding political imaginary as well as the concepts of enemy and border.

2.2 About Terminology and Language

The theorizations of this thesis largely rely on the idea that enemy-shore islands are essentially constructs that are purposefully created by the governments and in the media. Not only does the conceptualization base on this idea, but also because my research task is to create a new concept that is expressed via original terminology, it is especially crucial to justify choices that are made regarding the language. It is crucial for both informed decision-making but also transparent practice and accurate writing.

Firstly, instead of using the official state names of the countries that I focus on in this thesis, I choose to use the names that are established internationally: Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC), China (People's Republic of China, PRC), South Korea (Republic of Korea, ROK) and North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK). This decision is made for the sake of clarity for the reader. It has to be mentioned, though, that the official country names would describe the situation in a more nuanced way when it comes to the history and present of the two Chinas and two Koreas as ideologically divided regimes and nations.

Moreover, there are names of other geographic spaces too used in this thesis that require specific explanations and justification. For example, I have adopted the term West Sea to express the sea that is internationally known as the Yellow Sea. West Sea (서해 [seohae]) is a Korean term that both South and North Korea commonly use for the sea that lays on the west side of the Korean peninsula. It is also the same term that is included in the direct translation of the FWI, so it aligns with the focus of this thesis better than Yellow Sea. This, or any other linguistic choices made in this thesis, have no political or ideological meaning.

Finally, the usage of Korean and Chinese languages should be explained. I should include Korean and Chinese language words for at least such concepts and terms that are original in the Korean and Chinese political environment, or that are expressed in a unique manner in the Korean and Chinese languages. I follow the current Romanization system of the National Institute of Korean Language, and Taiwan Ministry of Education's Guidelines for Transliteration of Chinese, which is based on the *pinyin* system, respectively.

However, in the case of people and place names, I use them in their most established and widely recognized forms even if they do not follow the current romanization systems. Transliterating one's own name has been more liberal to begin with, but the forms may differ also because romanization systems have varied throughout history in both South Korea and Taiwan. For example, according to *pinyin*, the correct transliteration of Kinmen is [jinmen], however, Kinmen is the more established name for the island today. In the past Kinmen has also been commonly referred to as 'Quemoy' in Western contexts which derives from a local dialect (Baldacchino & Tsai,

2014, p. 18). Quemoy is still used in some contexts. For example, the English name of the local university is National Quemoy University.

3 Historical Background

This chapter overviews the historical context of the FWI and Kinma. It is important to understand the political environment of the time and the background of how and why these islands emerged as politically relevant spaces in the sense that I can refer to them as enemy-shore islands.

Since their emerging as new border islands and establishment in the hostile environment of the mid and late 1900s, the more recent new turning point for both the FWI and Kinma happened in the 1990s. However, the trajectories since then have almost been opposite in nature. In the FWI region, numerous significant military clashes still take place. On the other hand, Kinma has experienced a peaceful period and a withdrawal of forces since the end of the martial law in the 1990s.

3.1 Five West Sea Islands

The FWI consist of Baengnyeong Island (백령도), Daecheong Island (대청도), Yeonpyeong Island (연평도), Socheong Island (소청도) and Soyeonpyeong Island (소연평도) from largest to smallest. The islands belong under the administration of Incheon City and Ongjin County. The total population of the FWI was counted around 8,500 in 2010 with a majority of the residents living on Baengnyeong Island (Joo & Jung, 2022, p. 145). Out of these five islands, Baengnyeong, Daecheong and Socheong Islands are located furthest away from the South Korean coast. Yeonpyeong Island and its adjacent Soyeonpyeong Island are closer (see Figure 3).

While information about the islands' early years is not extremely abundant, for a thousand years the FWI region has been recognized as an abundant fishing ground as well as an area for the exchange of people, cultures and trade especially from China. The islands have also been considered a strategically important place for objecting foreign intruders. (Joo & Jung, 2022, 136–137). A ferry line is reported to have operated between mainland and the islands in the early 1900s transporting people and fishery goods also during the Japanese occupation period (Chun et al, 2022, 306).

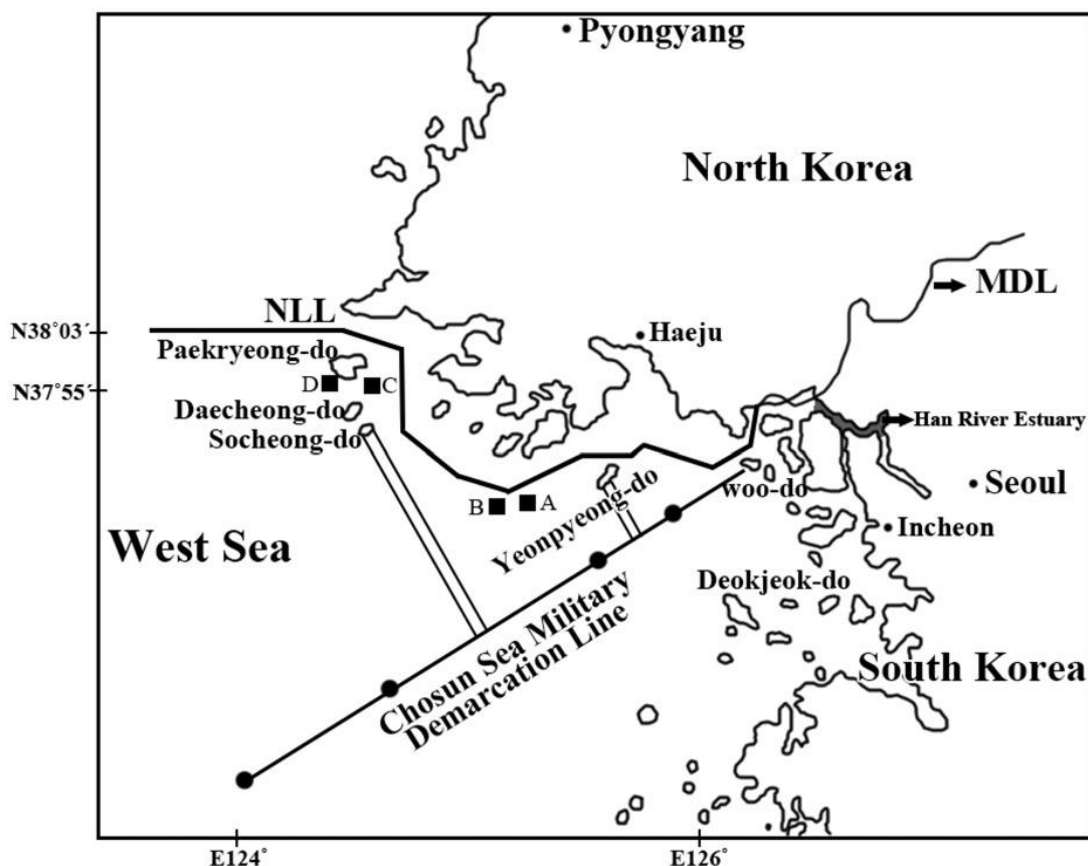


Figure 3. The NLL, Chosun Line and the FWI. (From Kim, 2019, p. 322)

At the end of the World War II, and at the beginning of Korean independence after a 35-year Japanese occupation, United States and Soviet Union agreed to divide Korea right at the middle of the peninsula at the 38th parallel under their respective trusteeships. Both world powers feared that the newly independent country was to fall under the influence of the other. In 1948, the controversial first presidential election in the South was seen as an attempt to establish South as the legitimate Korean regime and to divide Korea officially into two while the intention had been to unite the peninsula eventually.

Already in June 1950 the Korean War broke out when Soviet Union assisted Koreans in the North to launch an attack into South, that was receiving military support from the United Nation Command (UNC) forces operated by United States. After three years of fighting, forces were halt around the very 38th parallel. In July 1953, an armistice agreement was signed between UNC forces and China and Soviet Union setting the formal armistice line, Military Demarcation Line (MDL) at the 38th parallel. While the FWI was determined to belong to the jurisdiction of the South Korean side in the

armistice agreement, UNC and the Communist side could not reach an agreement on the location of a demarcation line in the West Sea.

UNC then proceeded to unilaterally set a maritime line called the Northern Limit Line (NLL) as a northern boundary to restrict UNC and South Korean vessels from entering North and triggering conflict. Ever since the one-sided establishment of the NLL, South Korea has treated the line as a maritime border between the two Koreas. At the same time, the controversy around its legality has greatly shaped the trajectory of the FWI region in the West Sea.

3.1.1 Northern Limit Line and the Emerge of the FWI Issue in the 1970s

The 1970s marked the beginning of the direct politicization and securitization of the FWI. In December 1973, North Korea officially declared their claims for waters south of the NLL for the very first time. They suggested a new line as the legal maritime border, the “Chosun Sea Military Demarcation Line”, which was based on the new 12-mile territorial sea standard of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). (CIA, 1974).

The FWI itself was never part of North Korea’s maritime territorial claims because the clause 13b in the armistice agreement (United States Forces Korea, 1953) establishes that there is no legal confusion. However, the islands would fall north of the Chosun Line, and for that reason North Korea demanded rights to the sea areas around the islands which would also mean that South Korea should need permissions to operate ferries to and from the islands.

The legal controversiality was recognized by United States too; a 1974 CIA report states that NLL “has no legal basis in international law, nor does it conform along some of its length to even minimal provisions regarding the division of territorial waters” (p. 2) and that “it is binding only on those military forces under the command” (p. 2) of the UNC (CIA, 1974), confirming its functionality as a limit line for UNC and South Korea’s own operations.

Moreover, it is clearly voiced that the US should not take part in the controversy about the NLL, because it is legally ambiguous. Although it is also noted that North Korea did

not show signs of refusing the border in the first 20 years of its implementation. (CIA, 1974). This is also why the issue is not something that South Korea is willing to handle internationally for that in legal consideration there may be a realistic risk to lose ground (sea ground) in the strategically crucial location of the FWI region (Roehrig, 2009, p. 17; Song, 2015, p. 63).

Along with their official rejection of the NLL, North Korea started a series of crossing the NLL into south, possibly expressing their rejection of the NLL in that way. At the time, South Korea was under the authoritarian regime lead by Park Chung-hee. Park had seized power through a military coup in 1962. Apart from the authoritarian and repressive nature of his regime, and a strong emphasis on security against the North Korean threat, South Korea also achieved significant economic growth and advancing in development during his period.

Entering the 1970s, Park's South Korea was facing a whole new set of problems. Firstly, the United States wanted to withdraw some of their forces stationed in Asia under new Nixon Doctrine. Such a withdrawal would have been a huge threat to South Korea's security situation, because their underdeveloped military could not defend the country without support from the United States military. Because of this, Park agreed to start inter-Korean unification talks to buy time to strengthen their own military. Simultaneously, North Korea agreed to the talks because they believed it would encourage United States to withdraw even quicker.

In the "July 4 South-North Joint Communiqué (1972), Korea's first agreed on principles for peaceful unification (UN Peacemaker), however any agreement that was achieved eventually failed. Arguably it was the failure of the inter-Korean talks, along with the declaration of the Chosun Line, were arguably among the factors that inspired North Korea to launch a series of confrontations, provocations, attacks and other incidents in the FWI region in the early 1970s.

In February 1974, North Korean fishing boats and naval vessels came south across the NLL, sinking one South Korean fishing boat and hijacking another to the North.

The South Korean government quickly organised huge anti-North Korea demonstrations in the same month and launched an ambitious administrative plan to

protect and fortify these islands. The quarrel over jurisdiction led the government to designate the five islands around the NLL with the new geographical appellation, the “FWI”. Subsequently, the Park regime established the Naval Defense Units for the Islands (NDU) on 11 March 1974.

Chun et al, 2022, p. 308

While the FWI were never practically a part of North Korean territorial claims, their role in protecting South Korean territory while also needing protection was now accepted. Chun et al (2022) suggest that increased opposition for Park’s regime and its legitimacy, though, which had fundamentally based on anti-communist and anti-North Korean endorsement that Park used this threat as one means to strengthen his power via security policies. The discourse campaign was further run in the public media (Chun et al, 2022; Kang, 2022).

3.1.2 Conflicts and Peace-making in the 21st Century

Since the 1970s, North and South Korea have clashed in the West Sea on various occasions. Most notable conflicts are the first and second Battles of Yeonpyeong (1999 and 2010), the sinking of the naval vessel *Cheonan* (2010), and the Yeonpyeong Island shelling (2002). There have been periods where infringements of the NLL happen even on a daily basis.

Table 1. Significant incidents in the West Sea.

Year	Incident
1973	North Korea officially claims NLL illegitimate; first mentions of “FWI” emerge in South Korean newspapers
1974	First North Korean provocations: attacks on South Korean fishing vessels
1999	North Korea’s declaration of the “Chosun Line”, 1st Battle of Yeonpyeong

2002	Yeonpyeong Island artillery shelling I
2010	Cheonan ship sinking, 2nd Battle of Yeonpyeong
2024	Yeonpyeong Island artillery shelling II

Incidents that are presented in Table 1 have killed and injured dozens of people, mainly marine soldiers. Interestingly, many of these incidents have followed inter-Korean peacemaking efforts or many times military exercises conducted by South Korea and the United States. Moreover, the incidents have aligned with crab fishing seasons as these crabs that are common in the West Sea are an important product for North Korea (e.g. Yea, 2022, p. 102). Smaller incidents and conflicts have taken place even daily.



Figure 4. Cheonan ship sinking memorial in Baengnyeong Island. Pictures by author, 2024.

In January 2024, North Korea again bombarded sea towards, although not reaching, Yeonpyeong Island in what they called a military drill. The event revealed another interesting detail: Chinese fishing vessels had disappeared from the distance which a coast guard confirmed typically happens when tensions are rising. He suggests that they might be informed by North Korea. (Reuters, 2024). On top of the infringements of North Korean vessels, illegal Chinese fishing is a common issue in the region, which has also cause tensions with South Korean coast guards.

3.2 Kinmen and Matsu Islands

Kinmen and Matsu Islands are two archipelagos that belong to the administration of Lienchiang County of Taiwan, but are located right by the coast of China, some 300 kilometers away from Taiwan Island. Kinmen Islands consist of two inhabited islands, Kinmen (金門 [jinmen]) and Lieyu (烈嶼) that is casually known as Little Kinmen (小金門 [xiaojinmen]), as well as a few islets. (See Figure 5). The registered population of the Kinmen main island is just under 130,000, while the population of the whole Kinmen County is around 140,000 (Kinmen Big Data Analysis, n.d.). However, it is likely that the number of residents that live on the islands full-time and long-term is somewhat lower.

The Matsu Archipelago is situated in Lienchiang County of Taiwan and it includes 36 islands and islets, the largest of which is Nangan (南竿) that serves as a transportation hub between Matsu and Taiwan for air and sea way. Other main islands are Beigan (北竿) and Dongyin (東引). (see Figure 6). The registered population of Matsu Islands is around 10,000 but the number of long-term residents is slightly fewer in reality (Lin, 2021, p. 20).

Kinmen has historically been a part of the Fujian Province during Chinese empires and Republics and had close trade contact with coastal towns in the province. Before the Chinese Civil War, the most common livelihoods in Kinmen were fishing and farming. (Chu and Hsu, 2024, p. 426–427). Matsu on the other hand has a history of being a stateless and even lawless community that mainland fishers used as their base during fishing seasons. (Lin, 2021, p. 56).

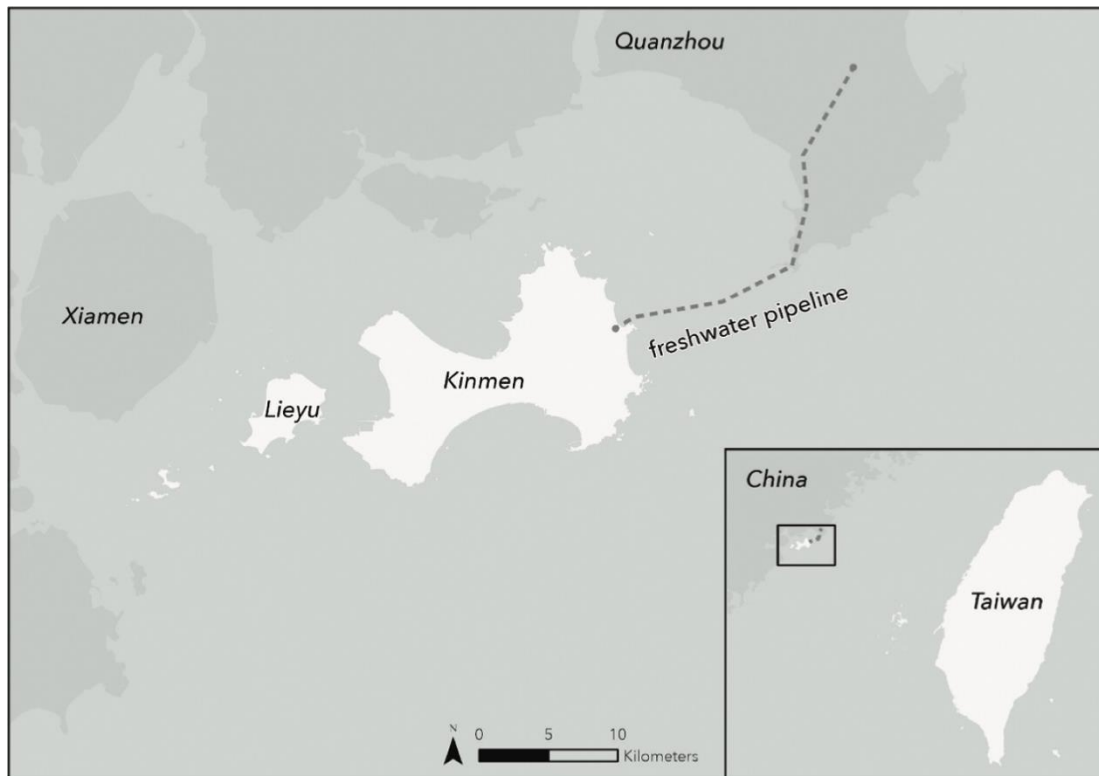


Figure 5. Kinmen Islands, the coast of China and the Kinmen-China water pipeline (from Chen, 2024, p. 2).

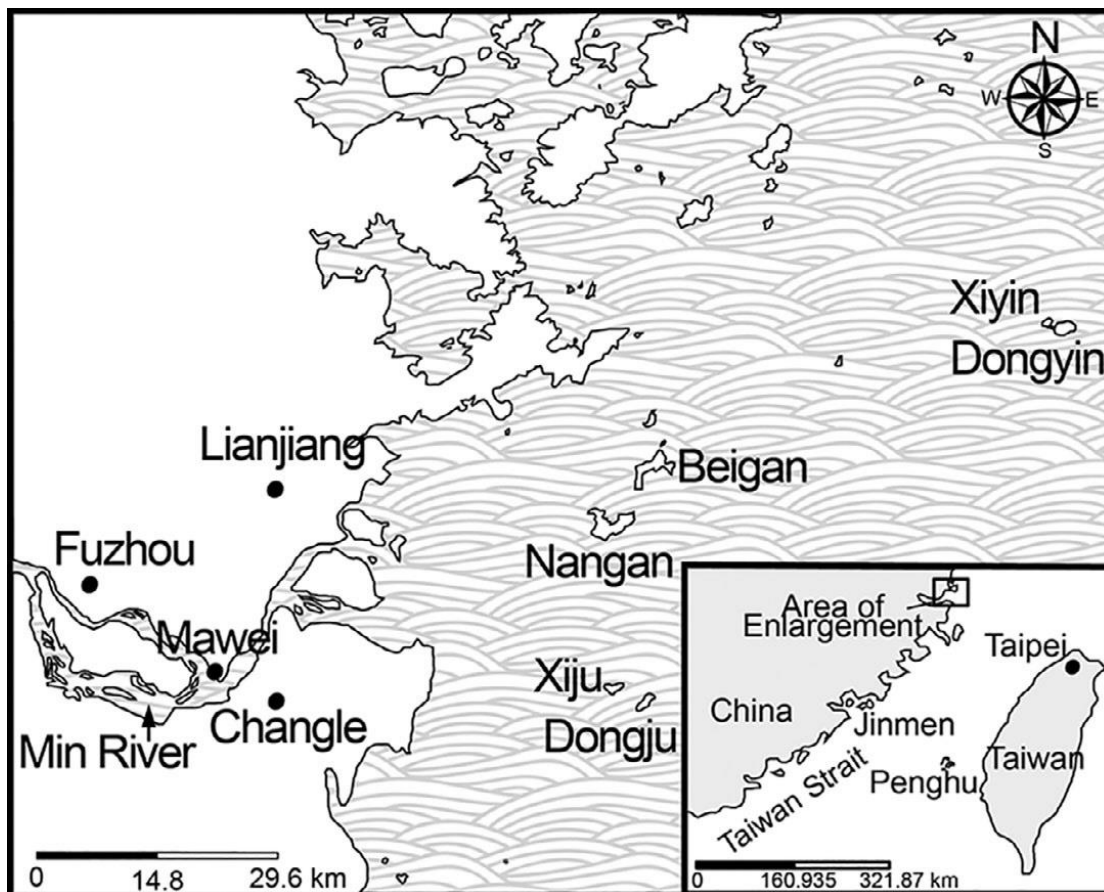


Figure 6. Matsu Islands. (From Lin, 2021, p. 18).

3.2.1 Chinese Civil War and the Rebirth of Kinma as Borderland

When Japan's occupation of Taiwan ended in 1945, the government of the Republic of China, Kuomintang (KMT), acquired control over the island and its adjacent smaller islands as a result of the Chinese Civil War between supporters of Nationalist China and Communist China. Kinma Islands, that located in the Fujian province on mainland, were not included in this. After Nationalists experiencing continuous defeats to Communists in the civil war on mainland, Chiang Kai-shek turned Taiwan into a military training base and a possible place to relocate in case of a Communist victory. In 1949, it became reality and KMT and the institutions of ROC had to fully retreat to Taipei in December (Gandil, 2025, p. 3).

At the same time, Communist forces' advancement through China from victory to victory and their further dream of crossing the Taiwan strait was barred when they unexpectedly lost a battle in a small town of Guningtou (pictured in Figure 7) in Kinmen Island in October 1949 (Chu & Hsu, 2024, p. 427). Kinmen, as well as other coastal

islands became the only regions that KMT could keep on that side of the Taiwan strait while rest of the mainland fell under the Communists' regime (CCP).



Figure 7. Entrance to the village of Guningtou in Kinmen. (Picture by author).

Chiang Kai-shek had not yet given up on the idea of retaking the whole of China, though, and especially Kinmen became the site from where a counterattack would be possible to launch at least symbolically (Chu and Hsu, 2024, p. 431). Womack (2016, p. 109) points out that many believed Chiang was likely to have acknowledged that it was highly unlikely that KMT forces would manage to retake mainland Chinese territory, and so he tried to use a crisis in Kinmen to tie United States into assisting them in the ultimate goal.

United States had expressed neutrality towards the Chinese situation, but in 1954 they started negotiations about a defence treaty with Taiwan. This development sparked China to start bombarding Kinmen which was the beginning of the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. After the treaty was signed, China continued protesting by invading Yijiangshan Island, another coastal island under KMT. This prompted the "Formosa Resolution" where United States assisted KMT's withdrawal from other small offshore islands surrendering them to China. (Gandil, 2025, p. 4).

Even though offshore islands had never been a part of the defence treaty, Gandil (2025, p.5) demonstrates that United States president Dwight D. Eisenhower had orally agreed to defend Kinma, if Chiang was to surrender these other islands to China. Ever after Taiwan withdrew from Tachen Islands in 1955, the maritime border between China and Taiwan has stayed the same. (Gandil, 2025, p. 4).

In 1958, China returned to bombarding Kinmen after failed talks between United States and China. It marked the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. Mao had explained to journalist Edgar Snow in 1960 that the goal of the operation had been to intimidate United States, that kept worrying about getting drawn into an open conflict with China. (Gandil, 2025, p. 5). In this sense, both sides used Kinmen in their negotiations with the United States.

War Zone Administration (WZA), in other words martial law, started in Kinma in 1954. The military governance system was established on the island, and the residents had to adapt their livelihoods under the rule (Chu & Hsu, 2024, p. 428–429). Restrictions were placed for movement in the seas but also travelling to and from Taiwan Island was highly restricted.

China's UN membership in 1971 was the end to the bombardment of Kinma. Yet, Kinma's military preparation only intensified in the 1970s. The number of troops reached 150,000 which was way more than the local population (Chu & Hsu, 2024, p. 430). The paradoxicality of Kinma's strategic significance only became more apparent after the active battling of the civil war and China's bombardments had ended. For Chiang Kai-shek, Kinma was the last hope to conquering mainland again, and on the other hand it was the frontline for defending Taiwan's main island, where KMT had the last chance to keep the regime alive.

3.2.2 Kinma's New Positioning after War Times

Martial law was finally removed and the WZA system terminated in Kinma in 1992, 40 years after the main island of Taiwan had already returned to normal life post-martial law. Withdrawing of troops caused considerable changes to lives and livelihoods that for decades had been tied to the militarization of the islands.

Kinma welcomed first Taiwanese tourists in 1993 (Chen, 2024, p. 14) after 40 years of having Kinma as part of ROC yet almost completely secluded from the rest of the ROC. The first ferry connection between Kinmen and mainland was opened in January 2001 and a regular ferry service started operations in 2004. For Matsu, such service began in 2008 (Lin, 2021, p. 207) which was also the inauguration year of the “Three Great Links” between Kinma and mainland China: bilateral post, trade, and transportation services (Lin, 2021, p. 20). Since 2018, a portion of Kinmen’s freshwater has been supplied from mainland China (see sub-chapter 5.4).

In this way Kinma transferred from a frontline to a gate to China and from a separated and controlled to an emerging of more relaxed relations. A shift which was also symbolic of the transformation of Taiwan from an authoritarian country to eventually a democracy and not strictly a top-down governance that it had been during the authoritarian period (Baldacchino & Tsai, 2014, p. 18). In Kinma, though, apart from the relaxing of tensions in the local sphere, the withdrawal of troops even caused feeling of abandonment by Taiwan (Lin, 2021, p. 207).

4 Conceptualizing the Five West Sea Islands and Kinmen and Matsu Islands as ‘Enemy-Shore Islands’

In this chapter, I coin and conceptualize “enemy-shore islands” which is the primary task of this study. I argue that enemy-shore islands are a unique borderland space that is shaped by an enemy-relation between the two bordering states while simultaneously these islands also tend to redefine that very same enemy-relation. This duality creates a complex issue that demands attention from policymakers in the central government. Enemy in this conceptualization is defined as a country that is imagined so different, or *other*, “that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible” (Schmitt, 1976, p. 27).

The conceptualization system is based on the traits of a good concept defined by Munck et al (2020). Thus, on top of describing what enemy-shore islands’ meaning is, this chapter also elaborates on the concept’s conceptual relations and attributes as well as the usage of the concept and the justifications for it. I evaluate the conceptualization in Chapter 6.

4.1 Outlining the Concept’s Geographic Attributes

The conceptualization of the FWI and Kinma as what I call enemy-shore islands first bases on the islands’ connection and relation with shore. Enemy-shore islands are offshore islands, in other words, islands that are “situated off the shore but within waters under a country’s control” as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, for example. Complexly though, enemy-shore islands are also located on the shore. However, the shore that they are on is not the authoritative country but another country. Thus, for example the FWI are offshore islands of South Korea yet located onshore of North Korea. Kinma are offshore islands of Taiwan but located onshore of China.

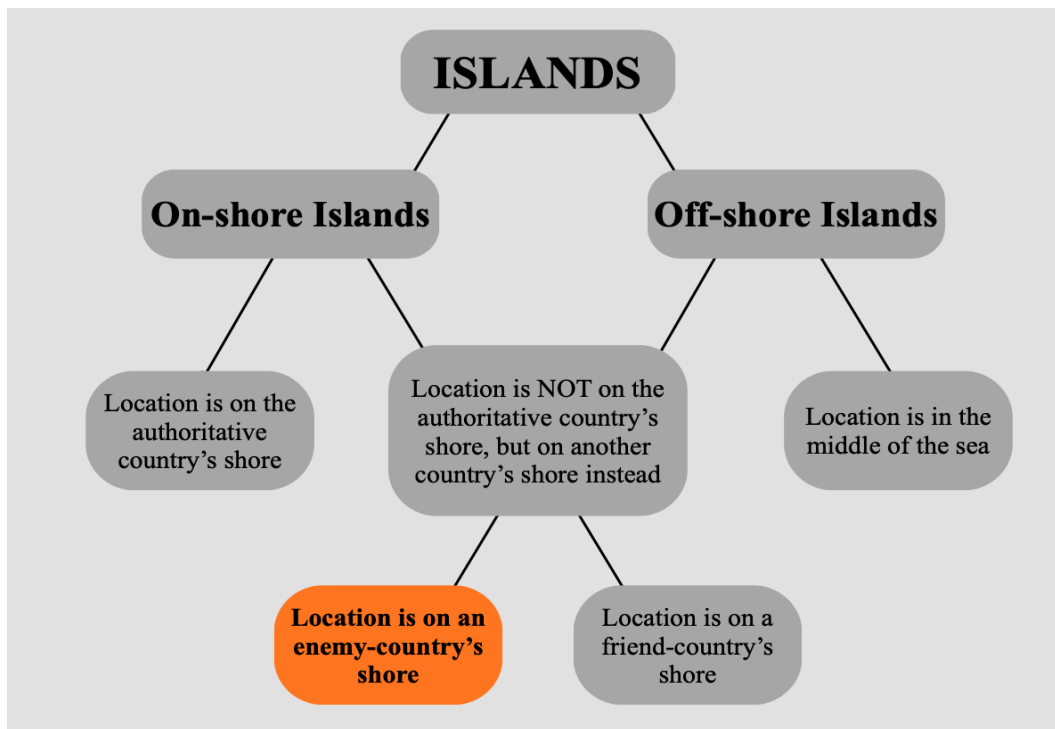


Figure 8. Taxonomy of islands in regard to their connection with shore. (Figure created by author.)

Thus, the first condition of an enemy-shore island is that it is offshore of the country that has authority over it (thus, an offshore island). It is then located on the shore of another country (thus, an onshore island). (See Figure 8). Moreover, and even more crucially, this *another country* cannot be whichever country in this case, or the meaning of the concept may disappear. It must be what I call an enemy-country. This is the second, and much more impactful condition and the whole basis of the concept. For now, we should simply pay attention to this enemy-factor in a terminological sense.

The geographic positioning of enemy-shore islands is illustrated in Figure 9. Here island A is the obvious positive case of enemy-shore islands. It is located off the shore of the “Country”, and on the shore of the “Country’s Enemy”. On the other hand, the most obvious negative case is island D. It fulfils none of the conditions. The other clearly negative case is island C. It is an offshore island, but it is not located on any shore. In the Figure 9, island B is the most debatable case as it does not fulfill the condition of being an offshore island, but it has a similar distance to both shores. It may share some of the characteristics of enemy-shore islands for that reason. Moreover, if in the figure “Country’s enemy” instead was named “Country’s friend”, even island A would not be an enemy-shore island.

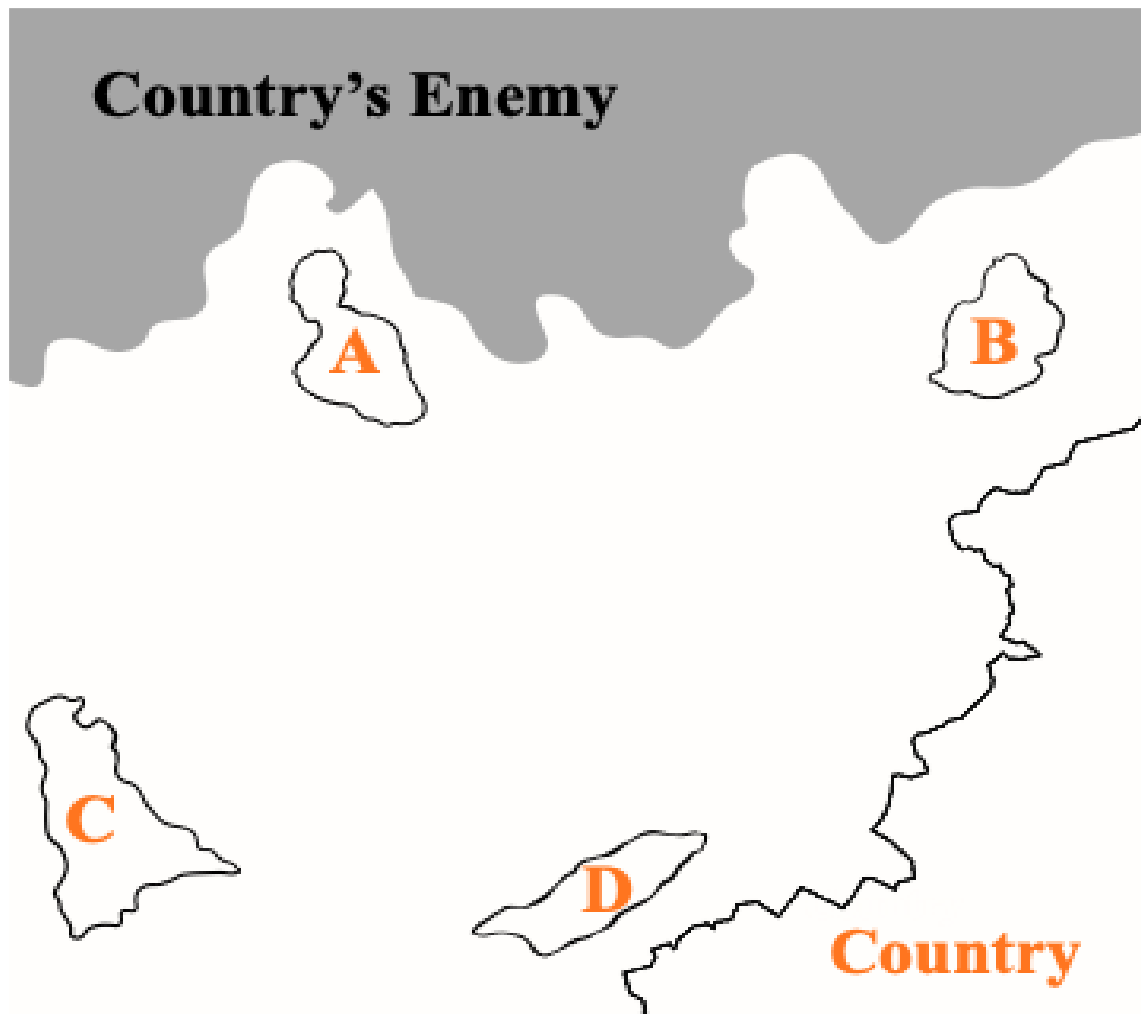


Figure 9. An exemplar map illustrating geography of enemy-shore islands and non-enemy-shore islands. Island A is an obvious enemy-shore island. Islands C and D are obvious non-enemy-shore islands. Island B can debatably be an enemy-shore island. (Figure created by author.)

Until now, I have offered the reader a basic understanding of what kind of geographical and spatial reality the term “enemy-shore island” is implying, and how it may differ from other types of islands in the most general sense. The basic conditions for an enemy-shore island are as follows: an enemy-shore island is both an onshore and offshore island, it is within a close proximity of the coast of another state, and that another state should be considered an enemy. The concept of an enemy, and other factors like the appropriate proximities from the coast and such follow in the next chapters.

4.2 On Enemy

Along with the basic geographic conditions of being an enemy-shore island, the most substantial factor is that the shore on which the island is located on, should be considered a shore of an “enemy” country. In this sub-chapter I define this enemy, that

is a crucial part of this conceptualization not only terminologically but also because it is what essentially provides these islands with politicized meaning. I should be especially careful with defining this part of the term because of the power and implications as well as negative connotations the word 'enemy' often contains.

In international relations enemy is not as simple as a hostile military adversary for example. Carl Schmitt famously defines a *political enemy*: it is a state as an entity that poses an existential threat to the sovereignty of another state (1976). To Schmitt, this is the essence of "the political", to decide which country is and which is not a part of your group of friend countries. Who is not a friend is an enemy.

The main takeaway from Schmitt on this matter should be that it is enough if the state has the "possibility of deciding" whether to fight the war, in other words, the morally justified ability to fight it (1976, p. 45–46). That is, as I see it, more about the essence of states being authorities that can technically make their people fight a war and justify it via the enemy-discourse, rather than the actual possibility of war. Nor is it about the fighting capabilities of states and the asymmetry of them that reflects in the willingness to fight and the outcome (see Womack, 2016). Whether or not certain two states have a realistic possibility of an armed conflict in the near future is somewhat irrelevant in that sense. But there must be an imaginary that it is possible in the sense that it is justified.

Moreover, political enemy does not need to be hated on a personal level by the people of a country (Schmitt, 1976, p. 29). This sets a clear distinction from a human-enemy first of all, but this idea also offers an interesting possible scenario where the people of the country don't personally need to have any hostile feelings towards what their country considers an enemy. That is why rather than personal dislike and hatred, the justification of a war would first and foremost focus on the imagining of *otherness*.

"The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible."

(Schmitt, 1976, p. 27)

While in the social reality otherness can be a mere “reality principle” “in Freudian terms” (Singer, 2020, p. 3), the idea of otherness, that is so strong that it can justify enmity towards another country, has to demand intentional construction. This deliberate construction of essentially a permanent threat to the country, has at least two usages. First, to justify legitimacy of the border, regime and territory (Song, 2015, p. 64) to international but also domestic audiences. Second, for domestic audiences the construction of enemy in this sense is used to make a thing that justifies implementing of martial law and such political schemes to control the nation for example (Chu & Hsu, 2024, p. 431). Or war in the most extreme case.

Thus, for enemy-shore islands, the enemy-relation between the two countries is not only a mere reason for the islands’ existence as enemy-shore islands. Simultaneously, the islands are used as tools to justify and upkeep that very same enemy-relation that helps legitimating the state at the borders as well as a variety of its governing schemes.

4.3 State and Border/land

Enemy-shore islands’ fundamental connection to the enemy strives from their location close to the border with the enemy. Enemy-shore islands are borderland by definition and thus hold certain functionalities connected to the border. However, they also tend to undermine the governmentality of the border. Such duality is at the core of the concept of enemy-shore islands from the perspective of the government. This sub-chapter examines enemy-shore islands’ roles in their border/land functionalities.

Before the emerge of the modern nation-state, borders tended to be more fluid, and borderlands often received only little interest from the central governments. More recently these “fuzzy territories of erstwhile empires were turned into carefully guarded zones of national sovereignty” (Zhang & , 2017, p. 23). Not only is it in the modern international system now necessary for legitimate states to have defined borders, borders also hold a more abstract functionality that incentivizes governments and policymakers to care about them in the first place.

This kind of functional value of borders is highlighted by, for example, Blanchard (2005) who identifies their six functions: “military-strategic, economic, constitutive, national identity, ethno-national unity, state building and preservation, and domestic political” functions (Blanchard, 2005, p. 691). These functions incentivize the government to adopt certain policies in order to utilize these functionalities that are needed for the upkeep of stateness and national security.

I use the term stateness to describe the upkeep or maintaining of a state after it has a legitimate position in the international domain. Before that, certain state-building practices are needed, and for example Chu & Hsu (2024) highlight the idea of borders as crucial components in state-building, which is important especially, although not solely, for newly emerged states. This is because, as stated, territorial sovereignty cannot exist without legitimate borders. Maintaining sovereignty is at the center of stateness, in other words, being a legitimate state.

While there are various opinions on what constitutes a legitimate sovereign state, a modern understanding of a state often essentially includes the ideas of security and the freedom of people. For Carl Schmitt, a state is the decisive political entity that assures “total peace within the state and its territory” (1976, p. 46). This implies the idea of the state holding a monopoly of violence within its borders meaning that the domestic law enforcement is the only actor who can use violence or other measures against own citizens to ensure general peace within the territory. Moreover, they can use violence against foreign actors to ensure the survival of the state, which is the central idea in national security.

Border/lands are thus also frontlines of managing survival of the state in the senses of legitimacy and security. Moreover, borderlands that are at uncertain or unsecured borders shared with the enemy are in a difficult position. Firstly, uncertain borders tend to be a source of cross-border tensions. That fact also highlights the potential of borders to not only be a sources of conflicts but also as tools to deliberately create tension or conflicts if that aligns with the objectives of the decisionmakers. (Blanchard, 2005). This further highlights the duality of borderlands like enemy-shore islands as not only sources of legitimacy or security issues but also possible politically functional objects for the government.

4.4 Understanding Korean and Chinese Inter-Borders and Enemy-Relations

To argue that the FWI and Kinma are cases of enemy-shore islands, it must first be proven then that the two Korean and two Chinese are states that are in enemy-relations. Moreover, it must be defined that the FWI and Kinma are such borderland that undermines stateness and security of the whole state but also has a functionality for maintaining the very same stateness and security.

Both two Koreas and two Chinas share a similar history of being a singular country and a nation that was divided into two competing regimes with opposing ideologies and supporters in the Cold War atmosphere. For example, Chu & Hsu (2024) call such development “accidental border” in the case of Kinma where the border was established not as a result of deliberate acts but rather as an outcome of unpredicted developments. They argue that it was especially the “accidental border activities in Kinma” (Chu & Hsu, 2024, p. 426) that helped reshape Taiwan as a state because the border was established there.

This accidentality is what makes it even more essential for these countries to introduce a ‘narrative of the immovable border’, as defined by Song (2015), for state-building purposes and to establish the legitimacy of the borders and the territory. This narrative emphasizes and constructs the border as a legitimate border, thus making it “immovable” and indisputable in that sense.

After the divisions of Korea and China, the hopes of unifying what once was one nation has always been in crossfire with the inescapable reality of that the enemy discourse and the concept of otherness were always needed and utilized by the two regimes and other political actors for political interests domestically and internationally too. What also boosted the erosion of any realistic hopes of unification, was the Cold War atmosphere emphasizing fundamental ideological differences, which established the discourse around the other side and their ideology as an enemy.

However, today younger generations have only known Koreas and Chinas as separate countries, and not only countries but also as separate nations. This is thanks to the

long-running propaganda emphasizing otherness, but it can also be seen as a rather natural development when interaction and communication between the two sides have been restricted and limited. This has allowed “two-state discourse” to emerge even if the goal of unification of the nation has not been abandoned in official terms.

More recently, North Korea has claimed for the first time that it has a “hostile relationship of two states” with South Korea (적대적 두 국가 관계) and that South Koreans do not belong to the same nation (BBC, 2024). Moreover, North Korea calls South Korea the “most hostile state” (가장 적대적인 국가) to North Korea (Yonhap, 2026).

Whether or not there is a realistic possibility of a full-scale war between the two Koreas or two Chinas could be debatable. But it is not very relevant debate in defining whether or not there is an enemy-relation between the countries. What is important in this case is to assess the discourse that creates otherness between them that would make war seem acceptable between the countries and that is true.

4.5 Conclusion: The Dual Position of Enemy-Shore Islands

In this chapter I have coined the concept of enemy-shore islands and explained its theoretical background. The basic criteria of an enemy-shore island are as follows: The location of the island is off the coast of the authoritative country and on the coast of another country, and the relation between these two countries are deemed as enemies instead of friends.

Moreover, I have detected features, related to security and governance, that enemy-shore islands have as borderland, especially from the perspective of the state and the government. These features exhibit the complex role enemy-shore islands have where they function both as tools for governments to achieve political objectives as well as a subjects of governing in state-making and security practices. Because there is no uniform opinion or means of how legitimacy and especially survival of the state should be acquired in practice, and moreover, because often contradicts in practice, enemy-shore islands’ duality challenges policymaking in this way, which is discussed in the following chapter.

5 Enemy-Shore Island Policy

This chapter answers to the research task of what type of policies are applied to enemy-shore islands, and how different “enemy-shore island policies” response to the dual nature of the islands. In other words, the goal of this chapter is to understand how these policies are utilized as tools in maintaining stateness and security, as well as how they can tackle the issues that enemy-shore islands impose to stateness and security, as defined in Chapter 4.

The analysis is based on the four policy directions I have detected to be commonly applied in the FWI and Kinma. The four policy types are militarization, development and aid, restrictions and cross-border cooperation. The categorization and the analysis of the policies is theoretical in nature and should be empirically tested in the future to guarantee the logic of the categorization. Moreover, it would be interesting to examine how different political parties and ideologies may affiliate with these four different policy directions.

5.1 Policy Directions

The four policy directions that are commonly applied in enemy-shore islands, as seen in the cases of the FWI and Kinma, are militarization, development and aid, restrictions and cross-border cooperation. In this sub-chapter I explain which characteristics each course of policies entails. Examples of real-life policies in the FWI and Kinma from the history as well as the current situation are provided to reinforce the claims of the theoretical considerations.

5.1.1 Militarization

Militarization is a common answer to the governance and security issues that enemy-shore islands entail. Through militarization enemy-shore islands can become a great strategic advantage as an improvement military capabilities and infrastructure against the enemy. According to Kenwick & Maxey’s (2025, p. 1008) definition, militarization of the border most commonly includes the deployment of military personnel (especially active-duty soldiers) as well as “the application of traditional military strategy, language,

technology, and symbology” (Kenwick & Maxey, 2025, p. 1008) to address the issues at the border.

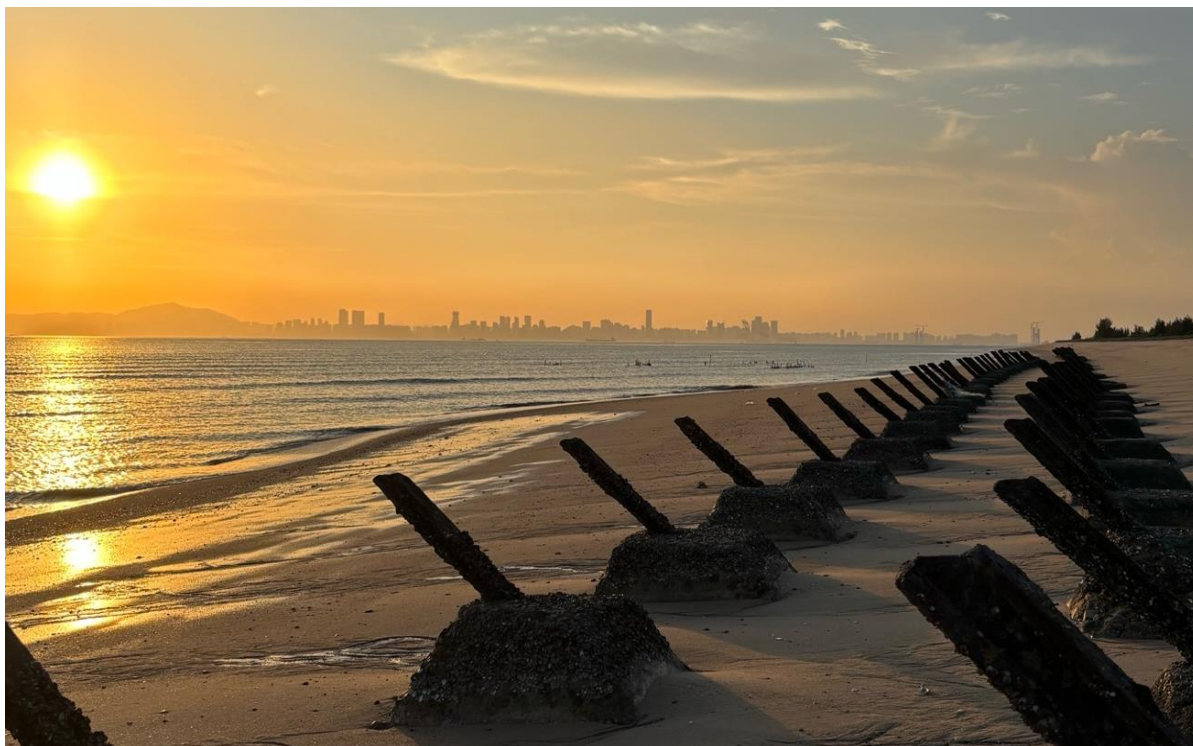


Figure 10. Anti-landing obstacles on a beach in Kinmen with the silhouette of Xiamen, China in the background. (Photo by author, 2025).

Moreover, militarization is not only about building physical (for example, see anti-landing obstacles in Figure 10) and mental barriers and arranging military infrastructure and weaponry; history shows that especially in such small and secluded places where resources and capabilities are scarce, militarization often demands arranging the local civil society and infrastructure around serving these military purposes. In Kinmen, for example, such arrangements were managed by the military taking over local governance systems during the WZA period (Chen, 2024, p. 11–12). According to Lin (2021), Matsu’s whole life changed from being a lawless outpost to a strictly governed military hub where local people were mobilized under the governance.

It is then also the local people that must adapt their lives to the military governance and a large number of troops. Chu & Hsu (2024, p. 430) report that according to Michael Szonyi (2008), at one point the number of soldiers in Kinmen reached 150,000 which was three times the local population at the time and a quarter of all of Taiwan’s

military forces. Local populations had to provide different services to the military personnel which changed livelihoods in the islands.

In this sense militarization does not only serve tackling of an external threat but the other benefit has to do with governmentality (Song, 2015); it improves governmental control over the local population. Even if they are not officially mobilized, it is also possible to encourage the people for self-activity. For example, Song (2015, p. 68) describes that fishers become “civilian scouts” who keep an eye on any activities out at sea.

Yet one of the most obvious indications about militarization’s complex influence in the region is that it can also harm local safety even if its purpose is to protect the whole nation. For example, experiences in Guam, a Pacific island that the United States uses as a military base, show that gathering crucial military capabilities in the island makes the space also a potential target of the enemy and thus puts the local residents in more danger (Davis et al, 2020). It is also obvious for example in those cases in the FWI, where locals have experienced serious injuries or even fatalities as a result of military conflicts in the West Sea (see Table 1).

5.1.2 Development and Aid

There are various development and financial aid policy schemes in place to improve the and support livelihoods in enemy-shore islands as risk compensation but also because the islands are essentially rural peripheries. In this sense the islands are a subject of such support. Implementing certain development policies can serve various political purposes though, as pointed out by for example Chu & Hsu (2024, p. 432). I claim that two courses of discourse showcase how enemy-shore islands are used as tools in both stateness and border governance via policies.

First of all, both in Koreas and Chinas’ cases, competition about development used to be one way to establish one’s government over the other. That is why enemy-shore islands, near the other side, showing high education and prosperous economy and livelihood were desirable goals and reason to develop the originally rural and underdeveloped areas. For example, Taiwanese government even organized visits to

experience the model governance in Kinmen (Chu & Hsu, 2024, p. 432). The idea also exhibits the fact that building of infrastructure and other development projects have been tied to militarization processes too. In this sense, development policy can utilize enemy-shore islands as a tool (within the enemy-relation) to exhibit the country's greatness.

Moreover, economic assistance and development projects in the region function as an encouragement of residency, because inhabitancy of the islands helps claiming territorial authority. Moreover, it "deters enemy nations or nations with territorial claims from invading the island for fear of killing non-combatant civilians" (Chun et al, 2022, p. 308). From this perspective, the residents of enemy-shore islands have a direct but passive role in protecting the islands and the country for just existing in the islands.

In South Korea, the Law of Development of Border Regions provides general support for certain regions near the border including the FWI. More importantly, since 2011 South Korea has established laws regarding the FWI specifically to ensure financial support for the residents of the islands: "A Comprehensive Development Plan for the Border Area" and "A Special Act in Support of Border Area" (Lee, 2023, p. 9). This kind of support could be described as incentives for residency or risk compensation.



Figure 11. Shimcheonggak Pavilion, a common tourist sight in Baengnyeong Island. Picture by author, 2024.

5.1.3 Restrictions and Control

Restrictions on residents' mobility and livelihoods are often implemented in enemy-shore islands. For example, in the FWI the restrictions particularly affect the fishing industry and the livelihoods of fishers as fishing is prohibited during the night because of a safety and security risk. Moreover, fishers are seen as challengers to governance and legitimacy of the border if they tend to cross state boundaries for better fishing opportunities. (Song, 2015, p. 68–69).

Similarly to the FWI, Taiwan's Kinmen and Matsu islands have also been a target of most likely even stricter restrictions when it comes to fishing and other aspects of life and livelihoods. According to Lin's (2021) book that studies the attitudes and memories of, for example, the fishers of Matsu, fishers were seen as a security risk during the first decades of the Taiwanese regime.



Figure 12. Coastal view on Baengnyeong Island. Picture by author, 2024.

Every fishing vessel had to get a permission each time they were leaving for the seas, and there were strict boundaries up until where and when the fishers were allowed to go. However, the fishers knew where they could get out of military surveillance at sea. Where they could not be seen, they engaged with mainland fishers as friends, and “did not participate in the enmity” between the two regimes. (Lin, 2021, p. 69).

Such friendliness may imply to the regime that these people are on the enemy’s side (Schmitt, 1976, p. 51). In this sense, an individual might become an internal enemy from the perspective of the government even if the purpose of being friendly with the enemy country’s people is completely non-political in nature. Lin (2021, p. 68) describes that these fishers were seen as “internal enemies and potential leakers of military secrets”.

However, these restrictions do not only restrict movement in regard to the enemy. Chu & Hsu (2024) argue that there is in this sense also an internal border. Restricting movement between Kinma and the Taiwan main island was essential when Kinma acted as an active frontline to protect Taiwan in the inter-Chinese conflict and during

the WZA period. These restrictions were also a symbolic act that legitimized Kinma as a dangerous region. Taiwanese tourists were only allowed in Kinma since 1993 (Chen, 2024, p. 14).

5.1.4 Cross-Border Cooperation

The fourth policy direction is cross-border cooperation, which I define as different collaborative initiatives where the two states or local actors across the border cooperate on an initiative in the local sphere. In the case of the FWI, cross-border cooperation initiatives have for example included proposals of special economic zones and a joint North-South fishing zone under the “10.4. North-South Declaration” which had also other implications for the FWI region. This initiative, as others, have failed to be actualized. Kang (2022) frames such cooperation efforts in the case of the FWI as a “peace frame” where North-South dialogue and agreement are made with the justification of improving people’s general safety.

After the WZA was lifted in Kinma, plans of cooperation between Kinma and the mainland started to emerge, and Kinma became a curious case for cross-border cooperation in enemy-shore islands. In 2001, the Taiwanese government started implementing the “Trial Operation of Transportation Links Between Kinmen/Matsu and the Mainland Area” which further expanded into “Three Direct Links” in a 2008 revision.

These three links refer to movement of goods and people between Kinmen Islands, Matsu Islands and China. In short, the policy allows with prior approval a restricted amount of mobility between these Taiwanese offshore islands and Fujian province in China in a way that is not possible in other parts of the country. The goals of this initiative were to strengthen local economy and development in Kinma as well as to decriminalize trade with the mainland. Moreover, the aim of the initiative was presented to institutionalize a mechanism that may promote exchange and dialogue between Taiwan and China. (Mainland Affairs Council, 2000).

Furthermore, Kinmen has received a large portion of its freshwater from mainland China since 2018 due to poor local water resources and failure to bring water from Taiwan main island. The opening of the freshwater pipeline (see location of the pipeline

in Figure 5) was a celebrated event in China and Kinmen. It was not only just a symbol of improved relations between Kinmen and China, but according to Chen (2024, p. 14), it also symbolized to the residents of Kinmen that when Taiwan had failed to take care of the water supplies of its offshore island, China had stepped in. The water pipe was first suggested by Fujian Province in 1995, while the Taiwanese side first participated in the planning since the early 2000s. The plans actualization postponed due to political disagreements and fluctuating cross-strait relations (Chen, 2024, p. 17).

These cases exhibit that cross-border cooperation can be 1) risky and demanding, 2) largely dependent on the other side's willingness to engage, and 3) divisive and generally very politicized issues domestically, and sometimes even internationally. Inter-Korean and inter-Chinese collaboration are some of the most politicized and polarized policy problems within the respective societies and political spaces of South Korea and Taiwan. Initiatives like the freshwater pipeline in Kinmen require some level of self-governance in the island, first of all, and second of all, either a lot of trust or alternatively indifference towards the local people and their local government from the central government.

As seen in the case of cooperation initiatives in Kinma too, even when “renewed contact with a long lost neighbour does not necessarily lead to a smoothing out, let alone disappearance, of sociocultural differences, cross-border engagement can be genuinely transformative” (Billé, 2014, p. 35), at least in the local sphere, while such initiatives may worry Taiwan main island. Similarly, examples like China's support for development and tourism in some Pacific islands show, that there are often political and strategic reasons behind initiatives that may seem noble on the surface. Of course, for countries like the United States, such projects in the Pacific present not only a possible security threat but also concerns of a widening sphere of Chinese influence. (Davis et al, 2020). Yet, offshore islands like enemy-shore islands can be ideal places to test out new policies and initiatives because in case they fail, there won't be too much harm to the mainland as it is very far away (Gandil, 2025).

5.2 Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced four enemy-shore island policy directions: militarization, development and aid, restrictions, and cross-border collaboration. The

examples illustrate how these policies address the issues as well as functionalities that enemy-shore islands have from the perspective of the government.

6 Discussion

In conclusion, this thesis conceptualizes the FWI of South Korea and Kinma of Taiwan as enemy-shore islands. There are three main conditions to the concept of enemy-shore islands. There are two geographic conditions. First, enemy-shore islands are offshore islands of the authoritative country. Second, they are onshore islands of another country. Thirdly, the country that the islands are onshore of, should be an enemy-country, thus a country that is imagined so different, or *other*, “that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible” (Schmitt, 1976, p. 27).

Enemy-shore islands are borderland that is located not only next to the border but the enemy-border, and they are thus directly connected to protecting of national survival in the spheres of legitimacy and security. The central finding of this study is that, from the perspective of the central government, enemy-shore islands have functionality in stateness, in other words maintaining the legitimacy of the state and its territory, and security governance. In those areas, the islands hold a certain duality where the government can use them as tools with which they can manage the border and security but at the same time the islands cause issues concerning that very same border as well as the security situation.

In that sense, enemy-shore island policies then are those instruments through which the government can functionalize these islands in governance practices. Simultaneously, and this is where the enemy-shore island policy dilemma arises, the islands have to be protected, compensated and supported for their location near the enemy. I have detected four policy directions, militarization, development and aid, restrictions and cross-border cooperation, that commonly attempt to tackle different aspects of this dilemma.

As no inhabited islands can be stripped off of their local communities, it can be observed that the residents of enemy-shore islands are at the same time playing pieces in the security and governance policy puzzles, however, they very much have their own agency too, especially considering that civil residency in contested areas is essential for territorial claims and rights of a state (e.g. Chun et al, 2022). Sustaining a

satisfaction of the local community to an extent at least is in that sense a relevant method to ensure this element, and it demands local

Policymaking is always balancing restrictions, or at least responsibilities, and freedoms of the citizens in a more general sense too, but it is apparent that the residents of enemy-shore islands face more restrictions than citizens in many other parts of the country. Moreover, the residents' actions and opinions may face scrutiny and suspicion as it may be difficult to understand perspectives of these island communities. As people who live at contested or dangerous borders, they are expected, or demanded, obedience not only for their own safety but also for the security of the whole state.

For the forementioned reasons, I argue that the central government's enemy-shore island policies are essentially although not solely what shapes the trajectories of the enemy-shore islands' realities. This is apparent in the cases of the FWI and Kinma that can be conceptually group as enemy-shore islands but diverging in their realities today because of the very different policies that have been implemented in the islands.

As opposed to the FWI, in Kinma, the government of Taiwan has allowed a level of local governance after the abolishment of the WZA system, even when local initiatives have often been politically controversial. Cross-border initiatives in the local or regional sphere have arguably improved the financial situation as well as enhanced convenience of life in the distant islands.

However, it also has to be noted that there are various factors, that play into policy decisions as well as policy outcomes, which are not explored in this study in detail. Most importantly the influence of foreign actors cannot be dismissed. For example, United States as an ally has had a huge impact and influence on the decisions that South Korea and Taiwan have made since the wartimes also regarding these enemy-shore islands. It can be perceived that the islands were also used as tools in managing relations with the United States, while they also have impacted the very same relations (for the American perspective, see for example Hartnett, 2018). In this sense, it is reasonable to conclude that domestic policy cannot be all that impacts the realities and trajectories of enemy-shore islands.

6.1 Evaluation of the Concept of Enemy-Shore Islands and Limitations of the Study

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the concept of enemy-shore islands shall be evaluated according to the criteria of a good concept defined by Munck et al (2020). Thus, in this sub-chapter I evaluate the concept's meaning, attributes, structure, or the relations of attributes, and reference. Finally, I discuss the limitations of this study and aspects of future tasks in this field.

Firstly, the concept of enemy-shore islands is coined to describe certain border islands that have a central role in in state-making and in the managing of the enemy-relations from the perspective of the government. Moreover, this concept functions as a theoretical basis for analysis of especially policies that are implemented in these islands.

The attributes of the concept include geographic conditions as well as the understanding of the enemy-relation as what makes this geography essentially geopolitical in nature. The reference of the concept are islands that fulfill these conditions. Enemy-shore islands are borderland and border islands by definition, but enemy-shore islands is a more specific concept which emphasizes the meaning of the islands.

Secondly, there are some limitations to this study. This study is largely limited to secondary literature and sources, and there is limited empirical data collection. Direct access to primary data in the local spheres can be limited because of the politicized nature of the topic. Moreover, as I do not have high proficiency in Chinese language, utilizing local Taiwanese materials proved difficult in this sense.

The scope of this concept is also narrow as this study concentrates on solely two examples of enemy-shore islands. Because there was no possibility to try applying this concept to other possible examples of enemy-shore islands, it is unclear whether or not there are more island spaces to which the concept of enemy-shore islands may apply. While the FWI and Kinma indeed are prime examples of this concept, because

of the narrowness of the scope, it is difficult to evaluate whether the usage of this concept could be generalized and expanded further.

Moreover, this study is limited to the preliminary construction of the concept of enemy-shore islands and to the discussions of the concept's theoretical aspects and dimensions. Discussing every relevant aspect of this conceptualization within the limited domains of space, time and resources of this thesis process was unfeasible.

For all these reasons, there is an apparent need to continue developing this concept especially by empirical testing and comparative study for which this study provides an expandable theoretical basis. Especially promising islands to include in future studies under the concept of enemy-shore islands include the contested Falkland Islands of United Kingdom, that are located close to Argentina, as well as the disputed Phu Quoc of Vietnam, which is located near Cambodia. Expanding the scope outside of East Asia will provide interesting insight into how different political environments may shape the realities of enemy-shore islands.

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