

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHINA-TAIWAN CONFLICT AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

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Abstract

The long-running dispute between China and Taiwan has not yet produced any positive outcomes. The international society is constantly interested in the ongoing confrontation between China and Taiwan, which appears to be getting worse from time to time. Relationships between nations are impacted by the conflict between the two, whether such relations are with China or Taiwan. The dispute between China and Taiwan will be examined in this research from the standpoint of realism, a theory used in the study of international affairs. The paper will examine how other nations engage with this conflict and how China and Taiwan attempt to preserve their national integrity by examining the issue from a realistic analysis standpoint. The research methodology employed in this piece is literary studies, which involves gathering secondary data to elucidate and evaluate the conflict, as well as determine the outcome and discussion. Some points were discovered using this strategy, beginning with the idea of power in the Sino-Taiwanese conflict, diplomatic connections, and the survival of both sides in the global order.

INTRODUCTION

Every nation engages in interactions and builds ties with every other nation in the field of international relations. Every nation has a stake in preserving national unity through these exchanges. But exchanges and collaboration between nations are not the only factors that shape international relations. Conflicts between nations can also arise from existing relationships, and these can have a significant impact on associated parties and even draw attention from the international community. Of course, there are a variety of causes behind every conflict, some of which can be challenging to handle or even serve as a catalyst for war. The dispute arising from the relationship between China and Taiwan is

among the more intricate disputes between nations. One further issue in this war is the acknowledgement of each side's integrity of state. The acknowledgment of diplomacy and the existence of each party in international relations are also connected to it, in addition to state recognition. As is well known, Taiwan practices democracy, while China adheres to communism. Situated across the Taiwan Strait from mainland China, Taiwan, commonly known as the Republic of China (ROC), is an island nation. Established as the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, it operates autonomously from the rest of China. As the PRC views Taiwan as a province gone rogue, it declares that the island will one day "unify"

with the continent. Political leaders in Taiwan, an island republic with 23 million citizens and a democratically elected government, hold different perspectives regarding the island's status and its connection to the mainland. Bilateral tensions have increased since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's election in 2016. A plan to foster closer ties across the Taiwan Strait that Tsai's predecessor, Ma Ying-jeou, backed has been rejected. Meanwhile, Beijing's actions have been more and more assertive, including the flying of fighter jets near the island. A Chinese strike on Taiwan has some analysts concerned that it might spark hostilities between China and the US. Taiwan is not a part of the UN organization. China opposes Taiwan's entry into UN agencies and other international organizations that are exclusive to countries. Taiwan's meaningful participation in these organizations is supported by both the US and Taipei, and Taipei often voices concerns about its exclusion from them. Taiwan is officially diplomatically connected to just 13 countries. Honduras became the latest country to do so when it forged diplomatic ties with China and Taiwan in March 2023. No government has ever maintained official diplomatic ties with Taiwan and China simultaneously.

Literature Review

Chen (2019) contributes factor to the complexity of the dispute is the ongoing political unrest in both China and Taiwan. One factor contributing to Taiwan's political instability is the disparate political interests and allegiances of various factions and parties. China's one-party system, which places a strong emphasis on compliance and control, keeps things politically stable. The creation of many viewpoints and strategies to address the Taiwan issue is made possible by this framework. There are many important variables that actively fuel conflict, including politics, language, ethnicity, religion, and culture. This leads to the establishment of organizations with opposing viewpoints and aims. Understanding the complexities of the Taiwan-China dispute, which takes into account variables including national heterogeneity, political unpredictability, and sovereignty questions, is essential in light of the swiftly changing global landscape. In conclusion, understanding the Taiwan-

China dispute requires examining elements including societal differences, political instability, and nepotism.

Chen, Yu-Jie (2022) through recognition of the complex nature of the dispute and its potential for resolution in the future, he worked toward a future where both countries can live in peace and prosperity. The relationship between China and Taiwan is clearly impacted by their near geographic vicinity as well as historical circumstances, as was noted while talking about the Influence of Geographical vicinity and Historical Factors. The Taiwan Strait acts as a physical barrier separating the two countries, and tension, hostility, and mistrust have always been present in their relationship.

Taiwan's split from China and the ongoing disagreement over Taiwan's political status are the consequences of the 1949 Chinese civil war, which had a significant historical impact on their relationship.

Cheng and Joseph (2013) according to them, there is now more antagonism between China and Taiwan as a result of the existing divide. Because of Beijing's long-standing hostility against Taiwan and Taipei's worries about China's military operations, despite notable advancements in exchanges and economic cooperation since 1987, Beijing and Taiwan continue to be isolated from one another.

Chu (2017) This is demonstrated by China's recurrent claims that Taiwan is a province engaged in rebellion and its yearly military exercises intended to put pressure on Taiwan to reunite. The implementation of these drills and the display of aggressive intimidation have had a disruptive effect on Taiwan and the larger Asian region.

Nawaz, A, Akhlaq, S, & Bilal (2023) Taiwan's close closeness to China serves as a continual reminder of their shared borders, which exacerbates the hostility and mistrust between the two countries. Tensions and animosity between China and Taiwan have increased due to historical events like the Chinese civil war and the ongoing debate over Taiwan's political status

MFA (2023) The destabilizing effects in the region have gotten worse due to China's ongoing military drills and hostile rhetoric directed against Taiwan. Their reciprocal status of isolation can be the reason for the ongoing hostility and lack of trust between

China and Taiwan. Tension, mistrust, and hostility have been hallmarks of China and Taiwan's relationship ever since their 1949 split. Geographical closeness and historical circumstances have formed the complicated and precarious relationship between China and Taiwan.

Nawaz & Rasool, (2023) A crucial point to remember is that Taiwan's military might significantly raises its geopolitical significance in the Asia-Pacific area. The presence of a formidable and proficient Taiwanese military serves as a disincentive against potential Chinese attack, hence sustaining regional security. Taiwan's military forces also take an active position in the larger Asia Pacific security framework, contributing significantly to regional security initiatives and cooperating in military drills with neighboring governments.

Heiduk, Felix (2022) The rising military capabilities gap between China and Taiwan has increased Taiwan's concerns about conventional security. The "first island chain," which is located near the East Asian continent and includes Taiwan, can be kept off from foreign access by using China's expanding naval capabilities. In summary, the strategic significance of Taiwan within the Asia-Pacific area is derived from its distinct political standing apart from China, its formidable military prowess, and the changing power balance in the Taiwan Strait. Where China is Boldness and Its Effect on Adjacent Nations is a factual account.

John, (2001) China's more assertive foreign policy has alarmed its neighbors because of the possible risks it poses to their economic stability, territorial integrity, and national security. Tensions with countries like Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia have increased because of China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, which cover contested islands and marine resources. The United States has had a significant impact on the relationship between Taiwan and China for a number of decades. By maintaining a long-standing relationship and offering steadfast support, including military aid, the arms trade, and participation in joint military exercises the United States has demonstrated its unflinching commitment to ensuring Taiwan's security.

Kim, Min-Hyung (2019) China knows that attacking Taiwan could lead to a military conflict with the US,

the US military presence on the island has prevented China from taking any aggressive action against Taiwan. Using diplomatic channels, the US has actively mediated and supported talks between Taiwan and China, encouraging all sides to pursue a nonviolent resolution to their differences through dialogue. This has been particularly important during times of greater stress, like in 2000 when Taiwan advanced toward independence under the Democratic Progressive Party. Despite China's objections, the United States has actively promoted Taiwan's worldwide recognition and inclusion in international organizations.

Conceptual Framework

China's right to external sovereignty and national interests necessitate a sophisticated approach when managing and resolving the Taiwan dispute, which is why the United States has emphasized the significance of Taipei administration's handling of the denominator of foreign policy. Tensions about combining national expression are tempered by a collision of identities that is raising awareness in China and Taiwan, respectively. The perspective of neoclassical realism theory is particularly evident in Taipei-Beijing interactions. The US-China competition is portrayed and analyzed based on internal characteristics that influence their outward conduct. The primary actors' policy arguments and interpretations center on the Taiwan issue.

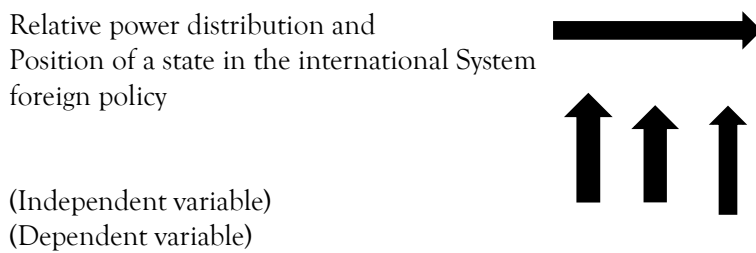
Notably, the concept of neoclassical realism was closely linked to the examination of foreign policy. An approach that combines the rigorous science and global system's dominance of explanation found in structural realism with the national structures and vision challenges of classical realists such as governance dilemmas is neoclassical realism. With a major impact on mainland policy, this viewpoint is certain to revive China's One China principle. The realist ideology presents a battle between bipolar control and the rise of political power, with the nation-state actor applying its dominating functions to combat with the United States.

China's decisions regarding its foreign policy were influenced by the dynamism of its national policy framework. China begins to assert its dominance by defining its jurisdiction over an increasing number of areas in its national interest, including not only areas

of conventional vitality like Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet but also some disputed regions like the South China Sea, in an effort to hold onto its enormous position. The foreign policy of neoclassical realism is decided by autonomous and mediating elements. When it comes to diplomatic relations, Xi Jinping reserves the idea of "desires to achieve," which aims to accommodate: (fenfayouwei). As such, China's quest of power is enclaved by assertive behavior, which serves to legitimize the position of the state authority. Chinese instruments foresee the hegemony's

acquisition of hard power, which frequently runs the risk of political unrest and economic flight. Since governments are human-led institutions, neorealism acknowledges that reacting inappropriately to outside stimuli may seem inappropriate. When the government of a state ignores the situation it finds itself in, this happens. National political or economic constraints that prevent the state apparatus from raising enough money from its people to properly compete with other states may force a state to choose a pointless response to outside forces.

Figure 1: Intervening variables.



Intervening variables

Source: B.A. Lindenmann, Neoclassical Realism and Foreign Policy Analysis. (2014)








Figure 1 illustrates the application of neoclassical realism theory to the stimulation of state structure, domestic rivalry, and identity and perception measurement. The ability and willingness of the distressed condition is the focal point of the four main categories' methodological approaches. (Xiaodi, 2023)

Conflict Dynamic

The Straits' characteristics fueled inevitable events that flashed power contests over the seas and the air.

Territorial water is shown in Figure 2 above, where the most important military invasion exercise is encircled into seven zones from various directions. Geopolitical congestion was refuted by the equally infamous "Cross-Straits Relations" theory. Over forty years later, the memory of Nixon's visit to China is beginning to fade. The CCP's ascent to prominence under Xi Jinping changed the concept of "Wolf Warrior Diplomacy," which in turn affected China's foreign policy dynamics. The dynamics caught up to a collision with the origin.

Chinese and Taiwanese armed forces

	 China	 Taiwan
Total active forces	2,035,000	169,000
Ground forces 	965,000	94,000
Navy 	260,000	40,000
Air force 	395,000	35,000
Reserves 	510,000	1,657,000
Tanks 	4,800	650
Aircraft 	3,348+	691+
Submarines 	59	4
Naval ships* 	86	26
Artillery 	9,550	2,093

*Only includes ships classified as principal surface combatants, such as aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and frigates

Source: The Military Balance 2023, IISS



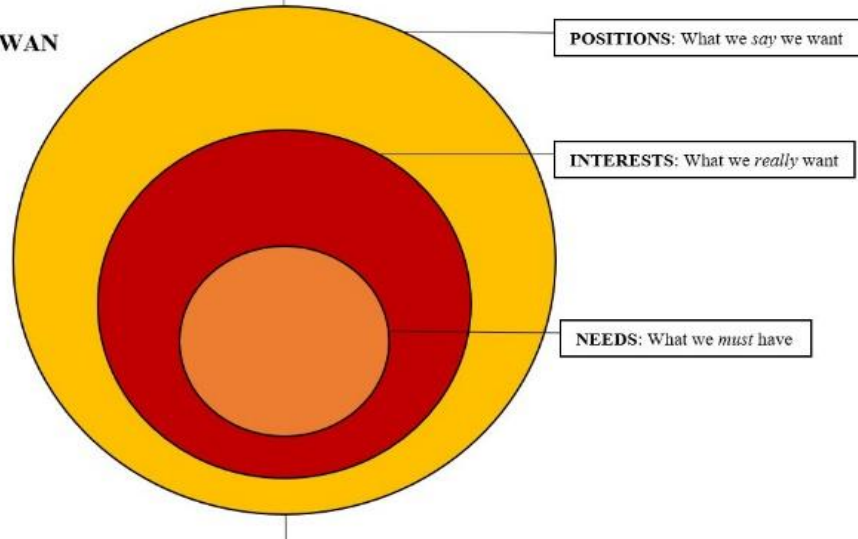
(David Brown, 2023)

Conflict Analysis

The conflict analysis related to the China-Taiwan conflict is covered in this section. Conflict analysis is a vital component of developing and implementing peace building initiatives because it focuses on obtaining an understanding of the conditions under which peace building action is desired. State actors evaluating the early stages of a dispute and avoiding lower risk are responsible for the possible course of a conflict originating from China and Taiwan, respectively in the sense of being aware of how policies and practices are sustained in the face of conflict.

In the event of an all-out conflict, the Strait Paradoxes explained why the US limited Taiwan's access to defense and support whenever the West had to carefully consider its course of action in response to Chinese military pressure. Three concentric circles are depicted in Figure 3 of the onion tool, which is dependent on the requirements, interests, and positions of the parties as they relate to the conflict between China and Taiwan. Given that every conflict involves a minimum of two actors, proper negotiation is required by the onion actor analysis (Shepperd Taryn, 2013).

CHINA VS. TAIWAN



Source: S. Fisher, J. Ludin, R. Smith, S. Williams, and D. Ibrahim Abhi are the sources. "Working Conflict: Actionable Skills and Strategies." Zed Books. (2020-10-29). Reached on June 1, 2023.

Resolutions and Suggestion

To sum up, when it comes to conflict resolution, China and Taiwan receive a lot of attention. Since not every problem has the capacity to be resolved, neither the first nor second paths of diplomacy have the knowledge or creativity to offer several viable answers. Notable is the way that the Chinese PLA's outbreak in Taiwan redirected a difficult situation with no clear solution. UN Resolution 2758 of 2021 misrepresented Taiwan as a part of China, formalizing the PRC's "One China" principle and disseminating the illusion that the UN member states are supportive of Taiwan as a PRC configuration. Different solutions to the China-Taiwan dispute may be imposed by the war. This typically consists of:

Direct Negotiations.

To do this, China and Taiwan would have to have a face-to-face conversation. It can be quite difficult to resolve the disagreement in this way, even if it is the simplest. Both sides must make compromise and offers.

Economic Cooperation.

A new merging collaboration in the economic sphere stimulates an opportunity to collaborate in cross-

advantage projects, countering the previously continued invalidity and lack of cohesiveness of SEF and ARATS. Which contribute to the development of trust and goodwill by sharing knowledge and labor to the amount necessary to resolve conflicts and foster a shared interest in doing so.

Cultural Exchanges.

Since the public views, China and Taiwan as having a peaceful atmosphere, learning about each other's cultures may help dispel prejudices and stereotypes. Is the employment of soft power likely to assert mutual understanding and empathy between the two sides? Indirect acquiescence of the elites? Aggression in intensifying additional regional strife and delaying the situation (Muhammad Iqhwana Madzli, 2023).

Brief History of China-Taiwan

Taiwan's history saw a number of changes. Taiwan was governed under several systems in earlier centuries by various Chinese emperors and European colonial powers. Taiwan was admitted as a province of China in 1885. The island was given to Japan, who ruled it for fifty years, when the Qing government was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. Taiwan was given back to China in 1945 following Japan's defeat. China views Taiwan as a "inalienable part of China's territory" in the context of this historical event.

The Republic of China was superseded in 1949 when the triumphant communists under Mao Zedong established the "People's Republic of China

(PRC)" (ROC). The Kuomintang (KMT), led by the deposed Chiang Kai-shek, withdrew to Taiwan. The United States and the Taiwanese administration kept up diplomatic ties during that time. Taiwan was the subject of a 1954 defense treaty signed by the US, which also maintained military bases there. That equation, however, began to shift in the 1970s.

The UN reinstated the PRC's rights in 1971, and the government of that country was acknowledged as the sole representative of China there. In 1979, the US established diplomatic connections with the PRC and broke off official contact with the Taiwanese government as part of the US-China rapprochement. From then on, the phrase "One-China Policy," which denotes that the US acknowledges the PRC as the only legitimate government of China, spread rapidly. Even though the US cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan, it passed the Taiwan Relation Act (TRA) to keep informal connections going and maintained the expectation that Taiwan's destiny would be determined peacefully. Along with providing Taiwan with defensive weapons, the US agreed under the TRA to keep Taiwan's ability to fend off threats to its security, social structure, or economy. The United States believes that Taiwan's status is unclear. While the United States "acknowledges the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China," as stated in the Joint Communiqué, the US made it clear in the Six Assurances that Taiwan's sovereignty is still up for debate. According to this perspective, the US did not support the Chinese stance on Taiwan, even though it did acknowledge it in light of geopolitical realities at the time. As a result, the matter remained unresolved, and this is due to the US and China's differing perspectives.

From ancient times, Taiwan has been an important part of China. According to the constitution, reunification with Taiwan is the sacred duty of the Chinese people, and the PRC considers Taiwan to be a part of its sacred territory. It vehemently rejects both the US's connections with the island and any assertion that Taiwan's status is still up for debate. Using the term "One-China Principle," the PRC holds that cutting off or forgoing diplomatic ties with Taiwanese authorities and acknowledging the PRC's government as the only legitimate government representing all of China constitute the foundation

of the principle governing foreign relations with China. China has long supported the idea that "one country, two systems" is the best strategy for achieving reunification.

While the language employed in the US and China's "One-China Policy" and "One-China Principle" has particular meanings and interpretations, it is less complex when applied to other nations. The rest of the world acknowledges the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the only legitimate government in China, with the exception of thirteen nations that have diplomatic links with Taiwan's government. They "recognize" Taiwan as a province or an inalienable part of China, or they "acknowledge," "take note of," "understand and respect" the PRC's position, as the general basis for their diplomatic ties with that country. Although the US and China agree that the PRC is China's only legitimate government, they have differing opinions about how to continue their diplomatic ties with Taiwan and its future. During the Taiwan Strait crises, this unsolved problem nearly pushed them to war and continued to affect their bilateral relations in recent decades. (Michael J. Green, 2017)

Potentials of Escalation and Possible Scenarios

Many stakeholders in China, the US, and its allies are getting ready for a possible escalation in the Taiwan Strait because to the growing geopolitical competition in the Indo-Pacific area and Taiwan's current resurgence of importance. Important military agencies, think tanks, and media outlets often simulate and test war scenarios to inform preparations and test policy. Various timelines are sketched, and multiple forecasts are given. Divergent views exist on the imminence of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, despite the fact that preparations are proceeding.

Taiwan contingency is listed as a pace scenario by the US Department of Defense (DOD). Certain experts in the United States believe that China is moving toward a pre-war state as evidenced by its military and political readiness. The PLA is getting ready to firmly unite Taiwan and prevent, postpone, or reject outside involvement on Taiwan's behalf, according to a testimony given in December 2021 by Ely Ratner, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs. Such an attempt is expected by

2027, according to former US Indo-Pacific Command Commander Admiral Philip S. Davidson. The US DOD is doubtful that China would be able to pursue "unification with Taiwan" if the PLA's 2027 modernization plan were to come to pass (Terri Moon Cronk).

Admiral John C. Aquilino, the Indo-Pacific Commander at the moment, stated that there is a considerably higher chance of such an incident happening. According to US Air Force General Michael A. Minihan, the US and China will fight each other for Taiwan in 2025. These dates are based on factors such as Taiwanese political discourse, President Xi's remarks, and China's military buildup. A serious threat to US interests in the Indo-Pacific region would be China's use of force in Taiwan. As a result, conversations in the US center on military readiness and the requirement for plans that handle various contingencies (Robert Blackwill and Philip Zelikow, 2021).

Crisis Returns in Taiwan Strait

Increased hostilities between the US and China have the potential to trigger another Taiwan Strait crisis. This anxiety may be caused by several things. It could first originate from actions that China considers provocative. According to China's 2022 White Paper, "should they ever cross our red lines," Beijing "will only be forced to take drastic measures to respond to the provocation of separatist elements or external forces." Second, every attempt to alter the status quo may give birth to it. In connection with this, China's consideration of the use of force is indicated in Article 8 of the Anti-Secession Law.

It stipulates that in the following scenarios, China may use non-peaceful means to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity: "Taiwan independence' secessionist forces" should act in any way or under any name to force Taiwan to secede from China, or significant events leading to Taiwan's separation from China should transpire, or all peaceful reunification options must be exhausted. But according to the US Department of Defense, these situations involving the use of force have changed throughout time and are still subjective. China may therefore employ force in situations other than those listed below.

There is disagreement over whether Taiwan will try such an endeavor, despite the fact that these are regarded as crucial requirements. While hyper nationalist sentiment may be on the rise, some respondents during the KIIs stressed that since Taiwan's survival depends on China's economic growth, this attitude is unlikely to materialize into actual action. Taiwan is likewise witnessing the rise of the populist narrative on a global scale. Given that it is aware that outside players have an impact on political narrative, China will not be incensed over this. But China won't give up on its fundamental interests if Taiwan really tries to alter the current situation. China has released its 2022 White Paper, which also reflects this. Furthermore, China is under tremendous internal pressure to address this issue. Boon claims that all politicians must adopt a firm stance on the Taiwan dispute since any leniency on the matter runs the risk of political irrelevance and betrayal charges. A Taiwan Strait crisis will therefore probably recur if efforts are made to alter the current situation.

It is difficult to predict how China would begin to employ force. It is challenging to predict who will act first because one of the strategy's main components is the element of surprise. Nevertheless, the purpose of this subsection is to sketch a scenario in which the Taiwan Strait is subject to restricted use of force. According to the US Department of Defense's recently released assessment on China, the PRC may use military force to seize and occupy all of Taiwan or parts of its offshore islands through "an air and/or maritime blockade to a full-scale amphibious invasion." In order to facilitate readiness and assess capabilities, strategists have offered an explanation of certain situations and possible reactions. Visualizing China's limited use of force on the outlying islands, such as Matsu, Kinmen, Pratas / Dongsha, or Penghu islands, is the first step in most US-based war simulations. China is probably going to use these kinds of tactics to pressure Taiwan to change course or start talking about reunification. In this case, a custom quarantine of Taiwan is also regarded as a possibility (Oriana Skylar Mastro, 2021).

Conclusions

China's expanding economic and military might, as well as differing perspectives on sovereignty, make

the China-Taiwan conflict a complicated matter. The Taiwan dispute is the most dangerous, with hostilities expected to continue well into the twenty-first century. The historical relationship between China and Taiwan has been characterized by animosity, mistrust, and conflict due to their close proximity. There is a chance that the present geopolitical tensions between China and Taiwan will turn into an armed conflict, putting the security and stability of nearby countries at risk. Through its support, participation in the arms trade, and military assistance, the United States has had a major impact on Taiwan and China's relationship. The United States continues to maintain a careful balance between its support for Taiwan and its broader geopolitical interests, but despite persistent tensions, diplomatic relations between the two nations remain stable. The course of relations between Taiwan and China is still unclear; possible results include the preservation of Taiwan's de facto autonomy, the reunion of Taiwan and mainland China, a peaceful resolution, or increased economic integration. The relationship between China and Taiwan has significant geopolitical ramifications since the two countries' shaky diplomatic ties run the risk of blowing up in a catastrophic way and jeopardizing regional stability.

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