

US-China and a New Taiwan Crisis: Deciphering Dimensions of Power Politics in the Pacific Ocean

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Abstract

Applying the Regional Security Complex as a yardstick for state's power projection, this research identifies complexities and actor preferences in the new and escalatory dimension to the US-China competition in the Taiwan Strait. China's insistence that Taiwan's position as an extension of sovereign territory of its mainland is further complicated by introduction of American assistance offered to Taiwan. Even though the US still recognizes the One China Policy, newly legislated assistance programs indicate a deviation from this stance by American strategists and political stakeholders. Beyond the Taiwan Relations Act, 1979 the US has recently introduced the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act within its Taiwan Policy Act, 2022 that offers comprehensive and direct military assistance to Taipei. This research develops an assessment paradigm on these policies adopted by the US and a possible retaliatory response from Beijing in calibrating how future of this crisis will manifest. This research also theorizes that by opting for a dual policy parameter, the US not only complicates the issue but also promotes an escalatory trend in the region which brings both the US and China closer to a direct confrontation since the Korean War. The research concludes that by opting for risk-intensive and escalation-oriented strategies, the Taiwan Crisis not only becomes a flashpoint for an intense friction among US and China but also encourages a domino effect of insecurity and realignment in the region.

Key Terms: *Taiwan Relations Act, 1979, Taiwan Enhanced Relations Act, One-China Policy, Crisis Escalation, Regional Influence.*

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Introduction

The Taiwan Strait, dividing mainland China from Taiwan, remains a consistent source of tension in the Asia-Pacific involving the United States and China. Originating in the mid-twentieth century when the Kuomintang relocated to Taiwan after losing to the Chinese Communist Party, Taiwan's status has since remained uncertain, complicating future politics in the region. Involvement of the US, evident in legislative acts like the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, the Taiwan Policy Act under the Biden administration, and the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act, raises security and geopolitical concerns. China's claims on Taiwan further exacerbate this longstanding disagreement, leading to periodic confrontations often termed the Taiwan Strait Crisis.¹

Owing to its strategic location, the Republic of China holds crucial importance for US interests in the Asia-Pacific, countering China's expansion efforts. Taiwan plays a pivotal military role by limiting China's access to regional resources, key forums, and international energy routes. The US advocates for a peaceful resolution through dialogue, discourages Taiwan from unilateral independence declarations, and urges China to refrain from using force for dispute resolution. While acknowledging the One China Principle, the US maintains unofficial economic, diplomatic, and security ties with Taiwan, bolstering its defense capabilities and providing advanced technology and weaponry.²

The Taiwan Strait has faced three prior challenges: the 1996 incident, the 1999 claimed US attack on the People's Republic of China diplomatic mission in Belgrade, and the 2001 mishap involving Chinese and American aircraft.³ These occurrences significantly influenced Sino-US relations in the post-Cold War period. The third crisis, prompted by the US invitation to Le Teng Hui to visit Cornell University, elicited a robust Chinese response

¹ Thomas J. Christensen, "New Challenges and Opportunities in the Taiwan Strait: Defining America's Role," *National Committee on United States-China Relations*, (2003), https://www.ncusr.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/page_attachments_New-Challenges-and-Opportunities-in-the-Taiwan-Strait.pdf.

² Mahmud Ali, *US-China Strategic Competition: Towards a New Power Equilibrium* (Springer, 2015), <https://ir101.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/book-ali-us-china-strategic-competition.pdf>.

³ Nora Maher, "US-China Policy Amid a Persistent Strategy: Is Conflict Over Taiwan Inevitable?," *Emerald*, 2023, 2–5, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/REPS-05-2023-0040/full/pdf>.

due to President Lee's controversial speech. However, neither of the events resulted in actual combat, they caused an immediate strain in bilateral ties and long-term harm to the two countries' relationship.⁴ Nancy Pelosi traveled to Taiwan in August 2022, purportedly to express her admiration for the democratic system on the contentious Island. China protested the visit and held several military exercises in six designated areas around Taiwan. The US responded by conducting aviation and naval activities close to Taiwan. As the Trump presidency progressed, the already tense Sino-US relations reached a critical juncture, symbolized by the Fourth Taiwan Crisis.⁵

Concerns between the US and China regarding Taiwan have heightened, especially during the Trump presidency, marked by a shift in policy towards Taiwan and the sale of advanced weaponry to the island, seen as a challenge to China's sovereignty. This article analyzes the recent uptick in Sino-US competition ahead of Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, focusing on political, economic, military, and diplomatic maneuvers, highlighting the risk of escalating crises. It also discusses potential outcomes, key policy signals, and heated exchanges among officials, which could exacerbate tensions in the Taiwan Strait, potentially leading to conflict.

Regional Security Complex; Understanding Strategic Stability of Taiwan

Barry Buzan and Ole Waever's concept of a Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) refers to the interconnected security perceptions, policies, and actions among governments in a specific region. RSCT explains how security relationships between states in a region are influenced by shared concerns. In the context of Taiwan, the intricate relationship involving Taiwan, China, the US, and other East Asian nations is crucial to RSCT. Taiwan's security and self-defense capabilities are particularly significant, as the US

⁴ Stephanie Christine Winkler. "Strategic Competition and US-China Relations: A Conceptual Analysis," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 2023, 333–356. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poad008>.

⁵ William Choong, "China, the United States and Taiwan: When Talking Matters," *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, (2022) 1-13, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/ISEAS_Perspective_2022_110.pdf.

and its allies worry about its ability to defend against potential threats from China. The US political and strategic efforts to contain China in the region profoundly impact the stability and security of the Taiwan Strait within the RSCT framework.⁶

In the Asia-Pacific region, the island of Taiwan creates a unique regional security complex that includes not just Taiwan but also the US and other nearby nations like the shores of Japan and South Korea. These actors share security concerns related to the Taiwan issue. The Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute between Japan and China heightens China's worries as an emerging power. Rising economies like the Philippines, Thailand, South Korea, and Singapore in East Asia are in close proximity to and receive military support from the US. Security interdependence plays a major role in the war of strategy between the US and PRC in the Taiwan Strait.

In RSCT, power dynamics are crucial, especially in the vicinity of China, where China rises as a regional power and the US maintains significant military forces as a major outside power. Their competition in the region is shaped by their relative power positions, with the US aiming to sustain its influence and China aspiring to establish dominance. RSCT highlights the significance of security communities within a complex identifying the role played by each actor within the security atmosphere it experiences. With the Taiwan crisis as a yardstick, understanding transitions between escalation and de-escalation are crucial to identify and outline the regional security complex as well as the securitization structure between the US, China, Taiwan and other regional partner's party to the crisis.

The US and Taiwan share a security partnership, while China endeavours to foster security relationships with neighboring countries in the region.⁷ The RSCT acknowledges the impact of norms and identities on shaping security behaviors. The 'One China' policy is an accepted practice that affects how nations approach the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan is

⁶ Barry Buzan, *The Logic of Regional Security in the Post-Cold War World*, vol. 4 (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2000), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-11498-3_1.

⁷ Barry Buzan, *Regional Security Complex Theory in the Post-Cold War World* (Springer, 2003), https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781403938794_8.

supported by the US but is not formally recognized as a separate state by China, which upholds the 'One China' concept. Because of the high degree of security interdependence, events or crises can escalate quickly across the Island of Taiwan. As a result, security dynamics are unpredictable and susceptible to change. The US and China utilize military operations, the purchase of arms, and diplomatic endeavours to impact the circumstances surrounding the Strait.⁸

Taiwan Relations Act 1979

Taiwan Relations Act, US, and Taiwan's informal ties are governed by a law passed by Congress in 1979. In the same year that this legislation was passed, Taiwan was recognized diplomatically by the US as the PRC under the One-China policy. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) mandates that the US provide Taiwan with self-defense equipment and guarantee the island's potential to protect itself from any use of force or coercion that would jeopardize the safety, well-being, or economic prospects of Taiwanese nationals.

According to one perspective, the US and the Chinese mainland are at odds over the transfer of weaponry to Taiwan.⁹ Historically, Taiwan's primary supply of weapons has come from the US, which has given it fighter jets, armaments, and navy vessels.¹⁰ Due to the sensitive nature of these transactions, detailed figures and specifics of the weapons and systems sold are typically not disclosed, and the US government often refrains from publicly acknowledging them.

⁸ Michaela Cruden, "Regional Security Complex Theory: Southeast Asia and the South Pacific," *University of Waikato*, 2011, 23–25, <https://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/items/b3540d71-fe3c-4593-92cb-2285a8214310/full>.

⁹ Christian Wirth, "'Power' and 'Stability' in the China-Japan-South Korea Regional Security Complex," *The Pacific Review* (2015): 8–11, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Christian-Wirth-3/publication/277012904_'Power'_and_'Stability'_in_the_China-Japan-South_Korea_Regional_Security_Complex_The_Simultaneity_of_Conflict_and_Cooperation_in_Northeast_Asia/links/555e6fa408ae9963a11417c0/Power-and-Stability-in-the-China-Japan-South-Korea-Regional-Security-Complex-The-Simultaneity-of-Conflit-and-Cooperation-in-Northeast-Asia.pdf.

¹⁰ Ji You and Yufan Hao, "The Political and Military Nexus of Beijing-Washington-Taipei: Military Interactions in the Taiwan Strait," *The China Review* 18, no. 3 (2018): 89–120, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26484534>.

As a major factor in their current confrontation, the Taiwan Relations Act essentially adds a great deal to the protracted confrontation between Beijing and the US. Stressing the intricacy and delicate nature of cross-strait issues, it emphasizes the significance of prompt and nonviolent reactions. The US controversial arsenals exports to Taipei have long been a source of rivalry between the two nations. By not formally acknowledging Taiwan's independence, the US maintains a policy based on strategic obscurity. Even in light of previous arms shipments, the US has promised to give Taiwan the means to defend itself.¹¹

Comparative Analysis of the Trump-Biden Administration on Taiwan

Taiwan became a source of dispute when President Donald Trump approved the Taiwan Travel Act, supporting official visits between the Republic of China (ROC) and the US across various levels of government. The Chinese Foreign Ministry strongly condemned this move, considering it a violation of the unwritten norm of One-China policy, which discourages high-level meetings that may imply official recognition of Taiwan's government. Some argue that the Trump administration's actions are undermining One China policy, a key foundation of current US-China relations.¹²

President Donald Trump's rejection of the One China policy was evident when he met with Taiwanese leader Tsai Ing-Wen after his election win.¹³ He criticized the policy's efficacy, suggesting that the US should not adhere to it until a deal is reached with Beijing, particularly addressing trade concerns. Trump viewed the One China policy as a bargaining chip with China, highlighting instances where China's actions, such as currency manipulation, imposing high tariffs on US goods, and constructing structures in the South

¹¹ Wang Jisi and Hu Ran, "From Cooperative Partnership to Strategic Competition: A Review of China–U.S. Relations 2009–2019," *China International Strategy Review*, 2019, 1–4, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42533-019-00007-w>.

¹² Bonnie Glaser, Michael Green, and Richard Bush, "Toward a Stronger U.S.-Taiwan Relationship," Centre for Strategic and International Studies (2020): http://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/201021_Glaser_TaskForce_Toward_A_Stronger_USTaiwan_Relationship_0.pdf

¹³ Richard Bush, "A One-China Policy Primer," *Brookings*, (2017): 1–25, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/one-china-policy-primer-web-final.pdf>.

China Sea were detrimental to US interests. On September 22, 2022, President Joe Biden drew notice by expressing in an interview that Taiwan will be safeguarded by the US in the event of an unprovoked attack by the mainland China. President Biden affirmed a commitment to strategic clarity, US policy has consistently opposed Taiwan's independence since the severance of diplomatic ties in 1979, forging official ties with mainland. The current stance of the State Department, as Antony Blinken added that the US would not support Taiwan's independence.¹⁴

In a much-anticipated speech at George Washington University in late May 2022, Secretary of State Antony Blinken outlined the US approach to Beijing. He emphasized China's unique position as the only country with the capacity to influence international norms across commercial, diplomatic, military, and technological domains. Blinken highlighted the Chinese Communist Party's increasingly assertive global stance and authoritarianism under Xi Jinping. Despite Beijing's resistance to change, Blinken reiterated US commitment to crafting a strategy focused on building an inclusive and open global system.¹⁵

The strategy, summarized as 'invest, align, and compete,' entails enhancing innovation, democracy, and competitiveness within the US, aligning with allies for unified action, and competing with China to protect US interests.¹⁶ The State Department stresses a commitment to avoiding violence and crises, advocating constructive engagement with China. Lloyd Austin labeled the PRC a threat to regional security in his Shangri-La Dialogue speech, indicating potential strain on bilateral relations as the US charts its future strategic course. The US Indo-Pacific and Pivot to Asia strategies reflect Cold War containment

¹⁴ Wei Zongyou and Zhang Yunhan, "The Biden Administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy and China-U.S. Strategic Competition," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, (2021): 157-178, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/S237740021500068>.

¹⁵ Christiane Khalileyh, "Pelosi's Trip to Taiwan and the U.S's Shift to Strategic Clarity," *ResPublica: Undergraduate Journal of Political Science* (2023): 1-10, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/respublica/article/view/41509/31787>.

¹⁶ Xiao Bao, "Biden's Policy Toward Taiwan: Democracy Narrative and Strategic Competition," *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, (2023): 198-207, https://www.scirp.org/pdf/jss_2023071813580738.pdf.

policies, posing risks to its relationship with China. President Biden reaffirmed his commitment to defend Taipei from Chinese invasion during a May 23, 2022, press conference with Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio. However, uncertainty surrounds the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) as the US does not explicitly promise to use force for Taiwan's defence. This marked Biden's third public support for Taiwan, as stated in the Japan-US Joint Leaders' Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order, 2022. In May 2022, President Biden also endorsed a bill to assist Taiwan in regaining observer status at the World Health Assembly (WHA). These US actions could heighten tensions with Beijing in the ongoing Asia-Pacific struggle.¹⁷

Recently, the Biden administration introduced the Taiwan Policy Act-2022, and a bill in the US Congress aims to designate Taiwan as a non-NATO major ally.¹⁸ The goal is to maintain stability in the Asia-Pacific, enhance Taipei's security against mainland threats, and deter China. Through this legislation, the US has allocated nearly \$4.5 billion in defense assistance to Taipei, elevating Taiwan's economic and security standing in various international forums. Nonetheless, tensions escalated in the Taiwan Strait, following Congressional Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taipei upsetting regional diplomatic balance. Some argue that such high-level US official visit to Taiwan interferes with China's internal affairs.

Nancy Pelosi's Visit and Shaping Fourth Taiwan Strait Crises

In July 2022, a story published in the Financial Times stated that Nancy Pelosi would be travelling to Taiwan in August. China's Foreign Affairs Ministry stated that if the visit proceeded, China is prepared to take decisive measures to safeguard sovereignty and national

¹⁷ Ryan Hass, "An American Perspective On The Role Of Taiwan In Us-China Relations," *Brookings*, (2022): 1-14, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FP_20220720_role_of_taiwan_hass.pdf.

¹⁸ Xiaodi Ye, "Alliance Coordination: Explaining the Logic of Biden's Taiwan Policy," *Inha Journal of International Studies*, (2022): 36, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Xiaodi-Ye-2/publication/366401128_Alliance_Coordination_Explaining_the_Logic_of_Biden's_Taiwan_Policy/links/63a11869024dc52c8a33e39f/Alliance-Coordination-Explaining-the-Logic-of-Bidens-Taiwan-Policy.pdf?origin=journalDetail&_tp=eyJwYWdljoiam91cm5hbERldGFpbCJ9.

integrity.¹⁹ China's Ministry of National Defence has warned that its army will not stand idly. In a subsequent phone conversation, Xi Jinping reportedly urged Joe Biden to prevent Congressional visit.²⁰ A senior White House official informed The Washington Post that Biden asserted Congress's independence and clarified that he would not interfere, leaving the speaker to decide on her travel. Biden also advised Xi to avoid aggressive actions if the visit happened.

Nicholas Burns, the American ambassador to China, was hurriedly called to the ministry by Chinese deputy foreign minister Xie Feng, who voiced firm objections and diplomatic protest. Xie Feng contended that Pelosi's actions were a deliberate provocation, cautioning that the United States was engaging in a risky endeavor. He emphasized that China's integrity and the One-China norm were all gravely violated. In addition, he claimed that it sent the wrong message to Taiwan's separatist organizations, gravely endangered peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and negatively affected relations between the US and China.²¹

While some US allies viewed the Speaker's visit as an unwanted and potentially unnecessary contributor to tensions in the Taiwan Strait, China's strong military response was universally regarded as reckless and provocative. In a statement issued on August 3, 2022, the Foreign Ministers of the Group of Seven (G7) expressed concern over China's provocative actions, suggesting they could lead to unwarranted escalation. The statement emphasized that using a visit as a pretext for hostile military maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait is unacceptable. Pelosi's visit initiated a blame game between China and the US.

¹⁹ Greg Mastel, "Thoughts on Pelosi's Taiwan Visit," *The International Economy*, (2022): 36–39, http://www.international-economy.com/TIE_Su22_Mastel.pdf.

²⁰ Xin Qiang and Wang Jialin, "On The Edge Of Crisis: Pelosi's Visit To Taiwan And Repercussions For The U.S.–China Rivalry," *Fudan University*, (2022): 175–187, <https://doi.org/10.20542/2307-1494-2022-2-175-187>.

²¹ David J. Keegan and Kyle Churchman, "Pelosi's 'Ironclad Commitment' Or 'Political Stunt' Leads To Crisis In The Taiwan Strait," *Pacific Forum*, (2022): 99–110, <https://cc.pacforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/08-China-Taiwan-Relations.pdf>.

China's National Rejuvenation under Xi; Aftermath of the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis

China maintains robust security, economic, and historical connections with Taiwan, viewing it historically as a reclaimed part of the empire, which would rectify a century-long legacy of humiliation and restore lost honor. The One China Policy and China's relations with Taiwan hinge on acknowledging the 1992 consensus, a discreet agreement between Beijing and the then-Taiwanese administration, a point frequently emphasized by Beijing. China considers Taiwan's reunification as a crucial historical development and perceives any efforts toward secession, especially with US support, as crossing a red line, consistent with Taiwan's foreign office declaring itself a part of China.²²

Taiwan's geostrategic location across the West Asia-Pacific area and proximity to Beijing make it an important strategic location for both security and economic reasons. If China gains control, it can access global energy corridors, extend economic influence beyond the First Island Chain, and dominate commerce routes in the Asia-Pacific. Assimilating Taiwan's semiconductor manufacturing sector would enhance China's economic growth, potentially surpassing the US sooner than expected. The combined economic potential of Taiwan and China could be leveraged by China to undermine US economic and security goals.

In 2019, President Xi of China reiterated the 'One Country, Two Systems' approach, offering Taiwan substantial autonomy while preserving its political and economic identity. China has strongly asserted its determination to prevent any attempts to separate Taiwan from the mainland. However, China's handling of Hong Kong has created skepticism in Taiwan, which doubts China's commitment to the One Country, Two Systems strategy.

²² Jorge Antonio and Chávez Mazuelos, "He Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation and Foreign Policy Under Xi Jinping," *Agenda Internacional*, (2022): 31-55, <https://revistas.pucp.edu.pe/index.php/agendainternacional/article/view/26012/24493>.

Consequently, Taiwan has cultivated new alliances and reduced its dependence on China, partly due to the influence and support from the US.²³

The Republic of China Problem and the Chinese Rejuvenation in a New Era is the title of a lengthy white paper released by the Chinese government in August 2022, coinciding with the conclusion of major military exercises (China Releases White Paper on Taiwan Question, Reunification in New Era, 2022).²⁴ It serves as a strategic communication tool for China, elucidating its rationale behind military actions to heighten tensions and outlining future policies toward Taiwan. The white paper also alludes to forthcoming changes following China's 20th Party Congress later this year. Xi Jinping's admonitions to Taiwan at China's 20th Party Congress drew international media scrutiny, signifying a historical shift towards China's reunification and national rejuvenation.

The 2022 white paper characterizes the achievement of China's rejuvenation and the resolution of the Taiwan issue as a significant historic objective. In previous speeches and white papers, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao often emphasized peaceful or national unification, although they previously referred to the ideal state for Taiwan as total union. Under Xi Jinping's presidency. There is a greater emphasis on complete unity. The 2022 white paper introduced the term 'historic mission,' indicating Xi's increased focus on unity, the imperative to progress towards unification, and the connection between unification and national revitalization. These aspects were absent from the 2000 white paper.²⁵

Amid escalating Beijing-Washington tensions, the Chinese military conducted extensive drills following Pelosi's August 2, 2022, Taipei visit. Chinese officials, including President Xi Jinping, consistently cautioned against backing Taiwan's independence,

²³ Baohui Zhang, "Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst: China's Varied Responses to US Strategic Competition," *Taylor and Francis*, (2023): 352–371, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2023.2201170>.

²⁴ 'The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era.' Xinhua, August, 10, 2022. <https://english.news.cn/20220810/d9d3b8702154b34bbf1d451b99bf64a/c.html>.

²⁵ Mingyue Liu, "From 'Strategic Ambiguity' Toward 'Strategic Clarity': U.S. Taiwan Policy Under Biden Presidency," *Academic Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, (2023): 1-3, <https://doi.org/10.54097/ajmss.v3i1.9050>.

warning of a robust military response.²⁶ Xi likened such actions to playing with fire during a July 28 virtual debate with US President Joe Biden. Despite China's stance, Taiwan's leaders remained unwavering. Tsai Ing-wen denounced China's aggression in an August 4 televised speech, reaffirming Taiwan's commitment to independence and democracy.

Upon Speaker of the House visit to Taiwan on August 2, a Chinese Foreign Affairs official, Xie-Feng, warned the US to cease its actions and threatened potential consequences. The Chinese Ambassador to the US, Qin Gang, issued a strong letter of protest urging correction of the mistake and mitigation of adverse effects. The third measure focused on exerting political influence. On August 3, 2022, a mainland official openly criticized the Democratic Progressive Party's provocative invitation to Pelosi, marking the first instance of public Chinese criticism of Tsai Ing-wen seeking foreign aid against the mainland.

The new white paper emphasizes mainland China's peaceful unification proposal, considering Taiwan's unique circumstances and aiming for long-term stability post-unification to avoid the unrest seen in Hong Kong in 2019. China seeks to prevent similar situations by maintaining control over Taiwan, ensuring its safety, security, autonomy, and economic growth. Taipei may have more administrative flexibility under the deal if China's conditions are met, although the autonomy of the Republic of China remains limited. This differs from the 2000 white paper, which pledged benefits to Taiwan after reunification without outlining conditions for retracting these offers.²⁷

Assessing Possible Scenarios for Taiwan's Future and Sino-US Strategic Competition Across the Asia-Pacific to the Indian Ocean

Taiwan's economic strength and strategic position have made it a significant source of influence for both Beijing and the US. The region's technologically savvy leadership has

²⁶ Qiang Xin, "Anti-Interference: Redoubled Focus of Chinese Mainland's Taiwan Policy," *China International Strategy Review*, (2023): 47-59, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-023-00131-8>.

²⁷ Chengqiu Wu, "Decoding US-China Strategic Competition: Comparative Leverages and Issue Selection," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, (2023): 31-60, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/poad001>.

the potential to tip the scales in favor of the ruling class. Despite historical, economic, and security ties to Taiwan, China has consistently pursued peaceful solutions, reserving coercive measures only in response to what it perceives as provocative cross-strait actions by the US, viewed as interference with and violations of China's sovereignty.

China refrained from initiating an ongoing dispute and refrained from specifying a date for potential military action to take control of the island. Despite the presence of US forces in the Cross-Straits, China chose not to impede them, underscoring its commitment to peace and stability. China is dedicated to enhancing its economic and technological development, as well as engaging in diplomatic outreach and cooperation with numerous nations. China's compassionate and cautious approach has prevented the escalation of conflict and crises in the region. Even the Russia-Ukraine dispute did not alter China's commitment to seeking peaceful resolutions to conflicts.²⁸

China maintains its position on Taiwan and remains opposed to US-Taiwan relations. To advance its agenda, China intends to support Taiwan political groups aligned with its interests, aiming to influence public opinion towards favoring China's unification and avoiding potential punitive measures and sanctions imposed by the US. Employing economic pressure and offering incentives, China seeks to increase its influence over Taiwan, making it an active participant in Cross-Strait security arrangements. Simultaneously, Taiwan holds significance for the US in safeguarding its interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Amid crisis, Taiwan faces a precarious situation, with NATO deeming China's actions provocative and a threat to US and Western interests. Conversely, China argues US meddling provoked it, challenging its priorities. Recent cross-strait military exercises threaten regional security. Both China and the US pursue deterrence, overlooking mutual reassurance. Taiwan leans towards the West, while China asserts power. The US cites shared

²⁸ Wang Jisi, "Assessing the Radical Transformation of U.S. Policy Toward China," *China International Strategy Review*, (January 2020): 195–204, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42533-019-00029-4>.

democratic values, law, and human rights in its Taiwan ties. Finding a peaceful resolution of Taiwan question for US is a growing challenging.²⁹

The Asia-Pacific region has become increasingly significant due to changing geopolitical dynamics, notably marked by China's rise as a major player and the declining influence of US hegemony. With China aiming to rebalance power and the US wary of Chinese ambitions, the region now faces potential conflict hotspot. In 2012, during the Obama administration, the US shifted its foreign policy priorities to the Asia-Pacific by introducing Pivot to Asia policy, addressing emerging threats. The strategic focus was further intensified by President Trump's administration with the introduction of Indo-Pacific strategy, extending its scope towards the Indian Ocean as a critical strategic hotspot.

The Asia-Pacific region, born from the liberal order and moving towards intricate interconnectedness, may overshadow the West in economic progress. However, current assumptions limit our understanding. The strategic rivalry between the US and China, vying for communication channels and freedom of action, creates an unfavorable environment. Thus, the Asia-Pacific, encompassing countries like South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines, plays a pivotal role in shaping multi-polarity. Cooperation between the US and China is essential in this era of growing interdependence.³⁰

The significance of the Indo-Pacific region has led to its transformation into a center of global geopolitical influence. China is actively working to enhance regional connectivity and promote collaborative efforts through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aiming for mutual benefits across all nations in the area. However, from a geopolitical perspective, the US perceives China as an increasing threat and is committed to maintaining its global

²⁹ Jenny Li, "China Under Xi Jinping," *Journal of International Affairs* (2022): 261-272, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/27203133>.

³⁰ Dean P. Chen, "The End of Liberal Engagement With China and the New US–Taiwan Focus," *Pacific Focus*, (December 16, 2020): 397-435, <https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12176>.

dominance. This involves strengthening its military presence in the Indo-Pacific and fostering strategic partnerships with Japan, Australia, and India.³¹

The Trump administration strongly prioritized security considerations in its Indo-Pacific strategy, aligning with the America First doctrine. However, this approach has been met with reluctance from regional countries. It contrasts with the Obama administration's Rebalancing efforts, which aimed to maintain US leadership in the Indo-Pacific through enhanced political, security, and economic connections with regional economies. With China's continuous efforts to advance the BRI and other initiatives for regional integration, the expectation is for China's influence in the region to continue expanding.

New security arrangements in the region like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the Trilateral Security Partnership between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS) have influenced US-China strategic competition in the Asia-Pacific. These alliances aim to counterbalance China's influence, with Quad focusing on security cooperation and AUKUS on defence and tech collaboration. This has heightened tensions between the US and China, shaping future crises and worsening existing flashpoints like the South China Sea. The competition between them is set to intensify, creating a complex and volatile security landscape in the region.³²

The Taiwan Strait crisis and broader Indo-Pacific tensions affect the Indian Ocean. Escalating China-US tensions over Taiwan could impact neighboring Indian Ocean countries, like Pakistan and India. Heightened military activity in Asia-Pacific may prompt responses from regional powers, potentially impacting the Indian Ocean maritime security and trade routes. This crisis highlights Asia's geopolitical interconnections, emphasizing the need for nuanced understanding to address emerging challenges.

³¹ Mariam Tahir, "The Implications of Expanding China-US Political and Strategic Influence in the Asia Pacific," *Journal of Development and Social Sciences*, (2024): 9–12, [https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024\(5-II\)29](https://doi.org/10.47205/jdss.2024(5-II)29).

³² Sayedur Rahman and Asma Sultana, "The China-US Economic Relationship in the Early 21st Century," *Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, (2024): 9–12, <https://doi.org/10.3126/kdk.v4i1.64575>.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Taiwan's military is strengthened by the US and Western allies amid China's rising military power. American engagement in Asia-Pacific dissuades a potential Chinese invasion, emphasizing the importance of avoiding military action to prevent crisis and safeguard global peace. International peace efforts are crucial for regional stability amid Cross-Straits tensions and shifting strategic dynamics. A Taiwan Strait conflict could harm global security and the economy, underscoring the need for caution and de-escalation.

A China-Taiwan conflict would threaten global food, energy, and economic interests. Taiwan's semiconductor industry, vital for China's economy and technology, would be jeopardized. China's control over Taiwan would diminish its regional influence, leading to global ramifications. To prevent this, the US and China must avoid provocations, fostering mutual trust to address disputes. Both nations share responsibility for regional peace and security. China should pursue a peaceful resolution, refraining from coercion, while the US should clarify its stance on the One China principle. Taiwan should maintain the status quo and avoid unilateral declarations.

After the Cuban Missile Crisis, US Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara suggested that containment strategy was replaced by crisis management. This concept is more apt for the contemporary Sino-US relationship than the US-Soviet dynamics of the Cold War. While strategy was paramount in the Washington-Moscow rivalry, China and the US lack a similar overarching global strategic rivalry. However, their conflicting interests, particularly regarding Taiwan, could lead to crises and major confrontations, underscoring the significant impact of such disputes despite both being major global players post-Cold War. Effectively managing crises is vital, but preventing new ones, especially regarding Taiwan, is paramount.

As Michael Swaine notes, both China and the US may struggle to control escalation once a Taiwan crisis erupts, risking wider conflict. The US should uphold its longstanding One-China policy, established since the Carter administration, to avert a Taiwan Strait

deadlock. Washington must clarify to Taipei that US support doesn't imply free rein, crucial as Taiwan's ruling party leans towards independence.

The intricate and multifaceted nature of Sino-US strategic competition has profound implications for regional stability. This competition is fueled by various factors, encompassing economic, military, and ideological disparities between the two countries. The Taiwan Strait is an important theatre of conflict where China claims Taiwan and wants to unite the country, while the US is obligated to defend Taiwan by its Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. This dynamic has resulted in heightened tensions between the two countries, raising concerns about the potential for an accidental or unintended military confrontation in the region.

Competition in the Taiwan Strait and broader Indo-Pacific shapes US-China actions in the Indo-Pacific. Tensions over Taiwan's sovereignty drive critical choices. The US must balance defending Taiwan and managing its relationship with China, while China wields influence cautiously. Regional countries like India, Pakistan's role is pivotal in the Indian Ocean, able to enhance cooperation or complicate the strategic landscape based on its alignment with US-China dynamics. The Quad's significance in the Indian Ocean emphasizes regional partnerships. Recent developments, like India's Europe-Middle East corridor, denote evolving cooperation and geopolitical consequences.

Disclosure Statement

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