

Title

**CHINA-TAIWAN POLITICAL CRISIS IN XI JINPING ERA:
SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST-ASIA**



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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents and family, whose unwavering support and sacrifices have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. I also honor the brave people of my beloved homeland who have sacrificed their lives for Pakistan.

DECLARATION

I, Nazish Manzoor, Registration No. 153FSS/MSPS/F21, student of MS, in Political Science at International Islamic University Islamabad do hereby solemnly declare that the thesis submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MS, in Political Science is my original work, except where otherwise acknowledged in the thesis, and has not been submitted earlier, and shall not be submitted by me in future for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university.

Dated: May, 2025

Signature of Student

Nazish Manzoor

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASBMs	Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CMC	Central Military Commission
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
ETP	Enhanced Trade Partnership
FIPA	Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement
ICEF	Information Communication Electronic Force Command
KMT	Kuomintang
MFA PRC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China
OCOs	Offensive Cyber Operations
PKC	People's Republic of Korea
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
TSMC	Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
US	United States

ABSTRACT

The China-Taiwan issue remains a significant and longstanding challenge in East Asia, with China asserting its claim over Taiwan as its breakaway province destined for reunification. Taiwan asserts its status as a self-governing entity, characterized by a distinct constitution and a government chosen through democratic processes. China ascends as a regional and global power, the Taiwan Strait persists as a contentious geopolitical demarcation. The complexities of this dispute extend beyond bilateral relations, as it has the potential to create major crises not only for China and Taiwan but also for other regional states. Since the US is involved in the area, the issue is also significant in international relations and has the potential to affect world security. The recent multiple directions of China's military drills, a serious threat would be posed by a military confrontation between China and Taiwan, which would further influenced the US-Indo-Pacific policies and strategic autonomy in the region. Therefore, the China-Taiwan issue demands careful attention and diplomatic efforts to avoid further escalation and promote stability in the region. The present research is adopted qualitative approach, and follow Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as well as twofold research objectives: firstly, to analyze the factors that are contributing to the escalation of the China-Taiwan political crisis, and secondly, to assess the implications of this crisis on the security dynamics of East Asia in Xi Jinping era. The finding underscores that the fundamental divergence over crisis management and the future conduct of cross-Strait relations not only sustains the China–Taiwan impasse but also carries significant security ramifications throughout East Asia.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

East Asia's most urgent and complicated security issues is the growing hostility between China and Taiwan. The longstanding and intricate dispute over sovereignty between these two regional powers not only has profound implications for their own security but also poses significant risks to the broader East Asian region. This issue holds paramount importance as East Asia comprises 20.5% of the world's population and houses several of the largest and most prosperous economies, with China and Japan ranked as the world's second and third-largest economies, respectively (Sarel, 1996; Nations, 2019). However, the uncertain condition created by the China-Taiwan security crisis could become a major obstacle to further economic development and stability in the region, potentially disrupting foreign investments and trade.

Historically, the roots of the Taiwan issue trace back over six decades, and looming as a potential flashpoint in East Asia with the potential to engage the region in a major war. The US has played a key role in deterring China from taking military action against Taiwan while also preventing Taiwan from declaring formal independence. This delicate stability in the Taiwan Strait has been sustained through a combination of diplomatic skill and military deterrence (Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021; Faisal & Maqbool, 2022). Yet, with China's assertive foreign policy under President Xi Jinping and increased military capabilities, and doubts about the US's commitments in the region, the effectiveness of the previous approach is now uncertain (Xinbo, 2008). The stability in cross-strait relations, which enabled Taiwan's democratic and economic development, is now challenged by shifting regional dynamics and potential conflicts (Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021).

The China-Taiwan conflict is a multifaceted issue, encompassing historical and modern legal status, territorial and political relations, Taiwan's identity as a state, international recognition, and the potential paths toward unification. Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), was originally home to indigenous peoples before being partially colonized by the Dutch from 1624 to 1668 (Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021). It then became a short-lived kingdom of Ming dynasty generals, but the Qing Empire took control of Taiwan in 1688 (Morris, n.d.). The Qing Dynasty encouraged people from mainland China to settle on Taiwan. After the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895, Taiwan was given to Japan. It stayed under Japanese control until 1945, when it was returned to China according to the Cairo Declaration (Lilley & Downs, 1997; Blackwill & Zelikow, 2021).

After the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Kuomintang (KMT) fled to Taiwan. During

the Cold War, the US recognized the government in Taipei as the legitimate representative of China. However, in 1971, President Nixon's administration sought to improve relations with China, leading to the Three Communiques, which recognized China's 'One China' policy (Peng, 2004; Ger, 2015). While the US officially recognized the People's Republic of China in 1979, it continued to maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan and supported the island through the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). Throughout the years, US administrations reaffirmed the One China policy while providing defensive arms to Taiwan (Wang, 2013; Womack, 2004).

Despite fluctuations in US-Taiwan relations, the status quo has largely been maintained to prevent conflict in the region. However, recent shifts in policies and statements have added complexity and unpredictability to the situation. For the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaders, Taiwan is seen as a crucial part of China, which was taken by Japan during the Sino-Japanese War in 1895. After the Chinese Civil War, Taiwan became a refuge for the Republic of China (ROC) government and military after their defeat in 1949. For Chinese nationalists, Taiwan symbolizes their goal to restore China's sovereignty and unity after years of humiliation. It also represents the CCP's ultimate victory over the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT) (Wuthnow et al., 2022; Wang, 2013). The CCP is strongly committed to reunification and continues to assert its determination to prevent Taiwan's independence. This position is reinforced by the 2005 Anti-Secession Law, which allows the use of "non-peaceful means" if necessary. Taiwan's status is a highly sensitive issue for the CCP, as leaders risk criticism from nationalists inside and outside the party if they are seen as weak in protecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Additionally, from 2017 through Nancy Pelosi's visit, CCP leaders have connected Taiwan's reunification with the progress of the Chinese people, setting an implicit deadline to achieve unification by 2049 (Wuthnow et al., 2022; Lee, 2022; Glaser, 2022).

Moreover, the US's position on the China-Taiwan issue is shaped by a complex and long history, internal political divisions regarding China, and concerns over China's rising power and political goals in East Asia. Thus, any of these factors could potentially alter the status quo and lead Asian states and South East Asia to adopt positions they would rather avoid, at least for the time being (Tellis, 2005; Leifer, 2001; Morrison & Vaughn, 2006). In East Asia context, the post-Maoist era had witnessed that China introduced a new strategy that not only opened its markets to foreign investments but also fostered friendly relations, especially with neighboring countries. This strategy helped China rise as a global power, prompting the US to view it as a potential competitor. In response, the US developed a "Pivot to Asia" strategy to

safeguard its strategic interests in East Asia, which directly challenged China's trade routes through the South China Sea. In turn, China launched the ambitious 'One Belt, One Road' initiative to improve intercontinental connectivity and establish alternative trade routes. A key element of this initiative is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which allows China to diversify its trade routes and reduce its reliance on the South China Sea (Jibran, 2021).

China considers Taiwan a rebellious province that should eventually be reunited with the mainland. In contrast, Taiwan views itself as an independent nation, with its own constitution and leaders chosen through democratic elections. Reunification is a central priority for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and any attempt toward Taiwan's independence is firmly opposed. The CCP connects Taiwan's reunification with the broader goal of revitalizing the Chinese nation, aiming to achieve this by 2049 (Wuthnow et al., 2022). China's growing significance in Asian affairs signifies a substantial shift in regional power dynamics. China has transformed into a prominent manufacturing hub and a central destination for flourishing intra-Asian and global trading networks, especially for goods destined for export to developed nations. The country has also witnessed extensive development of its infrastructure and has risen to the forefront in the production of steel, metals, cement, ships, cars, electronics, and textiles. China has become a leading consumer of global raw materials and holds a key position in Asia as a major trading partner for countries such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and several Southeast Asian nations (Suttler, 2005). China's economic growth, alongside its expanding trade and investment network in Northeast Asia, is altering regional dynamics, with significant implications for US-China relations, interactions with neighboring countries, potential conflicts over Taiwan, and the strategic interests of China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Through its "smile strategy," China aims to engage its neighbors by promoting trade and investment while presenting a less confrontational military stance, particularly regarding Taiwan. The Six-Party Talks, focused on the North Korean nuclear issue, bring together the US, China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Taiwanese companies have heavily invested in coastal China, increasing China's dependence on foreign investment and altering trade dynamics. As a result, China has become the top trading partner for Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea, surpassing the US (Nanto & Chanlett-Avery, 2006; Emmers, 2003).

Similarly, China has adopted a fast and advanced regional strategy in East Asia, primarily aimed at reducing the perception of being a regional threat. Tensions have risen because of territorial disputes over the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands and the South China Sea, which were heightened by major naval exercises in the second half of 2010. The perception of

a ‘China threat’ has been reinforced, prompting neighboring countries to adopt precautionary measures. Despite this, China acknowledges its relative disadvantage and has maintained flexibility, enabling ASEAN to retain the initiative in the region (Cheng, 2013).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The China-Taiwan political crisis, rooted in the unresolved legacy of the Chinese Civil War, continues to pose a serious threat to the stability of East Asia. While there is a substantial body of literature on the historical origins of the conflict and its general geopolitical implications, there is a lack of focused academic inquiry into how this crisis has evolved during the Xi Jinping era, particularly in terms of its security dimensions. Current developments, such as China’s growing assertiveness, Taiwan’s efforts to strengthen its defense with international support, and the strategic ambiguity of the United States, have introduced new complexities into the regional security environment. This study seeks to explore these little-studied the dynamics by analyzing the historical context, strategic posturing, and the roles of major powers in the region. A deeper understanding is necessary to assess the risks of conflict escalation and to propose viable paths for peaceful resolution and regional cooperation. To address this epistemic gap, the present study contributes valuable insights into the evolving security paradigm in East Asia during Xi Jinping’s leadership.

1.2.Objectives of the Study

- 1.** To analyze the factors contributing to the escalating China-Taiwan political crisis in Xi Jinping era.
- 2.** To assess the implications of the China-Taiwan political crisis on East Asian regional security.

1.3. Research Questions

- 1.** How has Xi Jinping’s leadership shaped the evolution of the China-Taiwan political crisis?
- 2.** How does the China-Taiwan crisis impact the security dynamics of East Asia?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The research on the China-Taiwan political crisis and its implications for the security of the East Asian region holds significant academic importance for several reasons. Firstly, it explores the complex political crisis between China and Taiwan, providing insights into the

historical, political, and military aspects of the dispute. This contributes to a more profound comprehension of regional security challenges in East Asia, particularly during the Xi Jinping era. Second, the study examines the historical and political root causes of the crisis, enriching academic discourse on the origins of the dispute and its enduring implications. Third, it identifies opportunities for conflict resolution and diplomacy by analyzing the role of major regional and international actors in managing the crisis. This can inform policymakers in East Asian countries and international organizations to develop more effective strategies for promoting stability and peace.

Moreover, the research assesses potential risks and destabilization arising from heightened tensions, providing insights for proactive measures to prevent escalation. The study also emphasizes the significance of peaceful regional cooperation and encourages engagement in dialogue and collective efforts to address shared security concerns. Lastly, it establishes an academic groundwork for future research, acting as a point of reference for researchers seeking to delve into specific dimensions or consequences of the crisis. Thus, this study contributes to knowledge, understanding, and potential solutions, aiming to positively impact the stability and security of East Asia.

1.5.Delimitations of the Study

The study primarily concentrates on the China-Taiwan political crisis and its main issues, examining historical and contemporary factors contributing to tensions between both countries. It focuses exclusively on the China-Taiwan dispute and its implications for East-Asian security. The time frame could be limited to the Xi Jinping era, with an emphasis on recent political and security developments.

Similarly, the research specifically emphasize the security dimension of the crisis, exploring sovereignty claims, territorial issues, military posturing, and strategies pursued by China and Taiwan. The research also examines the role and impact of international actors, particularly the United States, in addressing the China-Taiwan crisis. It examines how external players have shaped the crisis and influenced its resolution. The study assess the impact of the China-Taiwan crisis on East-Asian security, including its effects on regional stability, security alliances, and defense postures of neighboring countries.

1.6. Literature Review

The subject of China-Taiwan crisis has been extensively covered in the literature via books and articles, addressing various aspects such as their history, historical context and socio-

political dimensions. However, during the literature review, it became evident that different authors hold diverse views about China, leading to a range of perspectives on its regional strategy. Therefore, this research aims to analyze China-Taiwan security crisis and its implications for the security of East Asian region in Xi Jinping era. Many writers focus on specific aspects of China's engagement, such as the economic perspective, often neglecting other crucial factors like China's cultural, political, and military influence. This study seeks to take a comprehensive approach by discussing what are the historical and security roots of the China-Taiwan crisis, and how can major regional and international actors effectively contribute to managing the crisis. How might the China-Taiwan crisis impact the security dynamics of East Asia?

In their editing works *Crossing the Strait: China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan*, Joel Wuthnow et al. provide a comprehensive and insightful exploration of the China-Taiwan security crisis and its potential implications on regional security dynamics. The book explores into China's assertive stance, viewing Taiwan as integral to its territory, and its significant military modernization efforts aimed at deterring independence moves and promoting unification. In contrast, the United States pursues a diplomatic approach while reinforcing its military presence in the Western Pacific as a deterrent against potential Chinese aggression. The research highlights China's military options and Taiwan's defense strategy, underscoring the need for an in-depth knowledge of the evolving security landscape. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining stability and seeking peaceful resolutions to explore the security dynamics in the region effectively (Wuthnow et al., 2022). There are also potential limitations in predicting the actions of major actors and warns of escalating tensions and heightened security risks for East Asian neighbors, the present research will discussed such gap in details.

James R. Lilley and Chuck Downs in their edited book *Crisis in the Taiwan Strait*, presents an in-depth analysis of the multifaceted relationship between China and Taiwan, marked not only by the geographical separation of the Taiwan Strait but also by profound political ideology and cultural divergence. Both Beijing and Taipei cautiously navigate a waiting game, with Beijing favoring peaceful unification while considering the possibility of using military means if necessary, and Taiwan experiencing internal divisions between pro-unification and pro-independence factions. Although the Strait remained relatively stable, the events of 1996 revealed the risk of military conflict, underscoring the need to understand the capabilities of China's People's Liberation Army and the policy challenges arising from the

socio-economic and political differences between the two regions. Thus, while contributing to the understanding of the China-Taiwan security crisis, readers should complement this work with other research to obtain a more comprehensive analysis of the evolving security dynamics in the Taiwan Strait (Lilley & Downs, 1997). However, while the book offers valuable insights, it has limitations, including its focus on pre-1996 developments and potential biases in the selection of sources. It could benefit from exploring a broader range of perspectives and dimensions, such as economic interdependence and non-state actors' roles. Thus, the present research will analyse this in detail, especially in the Xi Jinping era.

Ralf Emmers' book titled *Cooperative Security and the Balance of Power in ASEAN and the ARF*, explores China's increasing influence in East Asia and its challenge to U.S. dominance in the region. The author argues that China's rise could result in a fragile balance and fluctuating U.S. influence. However, the reviewer believes that China's growth should not be viewed as a threat to U.S. interests, considering the current economic interdependence and China's unwavering economic support for the region. As the US faces constraints in maintaining its dominant role, a peaceful transition of power could occur. However, limitations in the book's coverage of recent events, such as the China- Taiwan Crisis, and the broader security landscape in East Asia may limit its relevance in understanding the region's present-day security challenges (Emmers, 2003).

Sheryn Lee in her report titled "Avoiding Nuclear War in The Taiwan Strait" was published in 2022 as part of an initiative designed to mitigate the risk of nuclear weapon deployment in Northeast Asia. The report extensively discussed China's military and non-military efforts, including the use of 'gray zone' tactics, to tilt the military balance in its favor against Taiwan and its objective to unify Taiwan through various means, considering historical cross-strait crises. Besides, the report explored why the US continues to support Taiwan despite the intense competition between the US and China. It also delved into Taiwan's reactions to China's coercive actions. However, there is a huge gap that the report did not address the potential impact of the arms race and potential nuclear proliferation in China, Japan, and the Korean peninsula on the smaller East-Asian nations. This aspect will be the focus of this study, which seeks to discuss the implications of the arms race on these smaller East-Asian countries (Lee, 2022).

Brantly Womack's work "Asymmetry theory and China's concept of multipolarity" China is regarded as a major power in East Asia, with a history of maintaining a hierarchical order in the region through its military strength. This role has contributed to the region's

sustainable development, security, and peace. The research also highlights that China has been a formidable military power in the region since ancient times. What is notable, however, is that China has not adopted a policy of aggression or expansionism, unless its security is directly threatened. According to a prominent Chinese scholar, China's foreign policy focuses on fostering friendly relations with neighboring countries and maintaining normal diplomatic ties with others (Womack, 2004). There is a potential gap regarding the Xi Jinping era, which the present study will discuss.

Christina J. Lai in her research article titled "More than Carrots and Sticks: Economic Statecraft and Coercion in China-Taiwan Relations from 2000 to 2019" highlights Beijing's increasing dependence on non-military methods of influence, such as economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation, to alter Taiwan's political landscape. It examines how China employs these coercive tactics against Taiwan and investigates Taiwan's responses through its economic strategies, focusing on the role and agency of a smaller state in international relations. However, the article's limitation lies in its failure to discuss the recent China-Taiwan Security Crisis and its specific impact on the dynamics of economic statecraft and coercion between the two entities. The study emphasizes the power imbalance between China and Taiwan and highlights Taiwan's efforts to counter Chinese economic pressure through trade and investment diversification. However, it does not explore how the security landscape has changed in response to this crisis or its impact on Taiwan's economic statecraft strategies. Additional research is needed to examine the effects of the China-Taiwan Security Crisis on the success of China's economic coercion and how Taiwan adjusts its responses (Lai, 2021).

Bonnie S. Glaser in her research article entitled "US-China Relations sink further amid another Taiwan Strait Crisis," offers a comprehensive review of key speeches by high-ranking US officials concerning China and their responses to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. While it highlights China's strong reaction to Pelosi's visit through provocative military exercises and punitive economic measures against Taiwan, the article's limitation lies in its narrow focus on US-China relations without extensively analyzing the broader security implications of the China-Taiwan Crisis. A more comprehensive examination of the crisis's impact on regional security dynamics and the perspectives of other regional actors could enhance the understanding of potential avenues for peaceful resolution and cooperation in the East Asian region (Glaser, 2022). The present study analyses these dimensions in detail while applying the RSCT as the theoretical framework.

Ramsha Faisal and Talal Maqbool in their research article "China-Taiwan Dispute and

The Role Of United States: War Risks And Conflict” explores the escalating war risks and conflicts involving China, the United States, and Taiwan, with a focus on the security crisis in the Taiwan Strait. The study addresses fundamental questions regarding the potential scenarios if the US were to defend Taiwan or if China were to invade the island. Additionally, it examines Taiwan's importance and benefits as an island and the challenges it faces, including its exclusion from the United Nations due to China’s opposition. The research adopts a qualitative methodology, grounded in the realism theory, to analyze the complex relations among the involved parties. However, the article does not provide an in-depth analysis of the historical context, geopolitical complexities, and potential conflict escalation in the China-Taiwan Security Crisis, leaving a gap in understanding the broader dynamics of the situation. Besides, it could benefit from examining the perspectives of other regional actors and exploring potential avenues for peaceful resolution and diplomatic engagement amidst the sensitive and evolving situation in the Taiwan Strait (Faisal & Maqbool, 2022).

In Research article entitled “Cross-Strait Relations and the Taiwan Relations Act,” Yeong-kuang Ger provides a comprehensive overview of six historical eras in China-Taiwan relations, ranging from military confrontation to peaceful negotiation. The article also examines three key challenges facing Taiwan: the "One China" policy, arms sales and Taiwan's security, and Taiwan's role in international organizations. The Taiwan Relations Act, enacted by the US Congress in 1979, has played a crucial role in preserving unofficial ties between the US and Taiwan. However, the article does not fully address the changing dynamics of the China-Taiwan security crisis and its wider security implications for the East Asian region. An up-to-date analysis is essential to understand the current geopolitical landscape, especially considering China's continued military build-up and its impact on regional stability. Additionally, the study could further explore the responses and strategies of other East Asian countries in the context of the China-Taiwan Security Crisis and how it shapes their security policies in the region. An in-depth examination of these aspects would enhance the study’s relevance and applicability to the evolving security challenges in East Asia (Ger, 2015).

1.7. Research Methodology

a) Research Design

The present study’s research design incorporates qualitative approach, which endeavors to comprehensively examine the China-Taiwan political crisis in Xi Jinping era and its implications on East Asian security. The research methodology encompasses analytical components, with the overarching goal of presenting a thorough depiction of the key events

influencing the China- Taiwan political crisis and its potential ramifications for the future. By integrating qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, the investigation strives to achieve a holistic comprehension of the intricate intricacies underlying the crisis.

b) Data Collection

The data collection methodology for this study encompass secondary sources. The data is gathered through an extensive literature review encompassing scholarly articles, academic publications, official documents, and reputable reports. These secondary sources could be instrumental in providing a comprehensive historical context and facilitating the examination of regional security trends. The analysis of the secondary data predominantly involve thematic analysis, focusing on materials such as articles, journals, research papers, government documents, and media reports. The rigorous examination and interpretation of these secondary sources would yield valuable insights, contributing to a robust and comprehensive research outcome.

c) Data Analysis

During the data analysis phase, the study adopts a thematic analysis approach to scrutinize the qualitative data. This method facilitates the identification of recurrent themes and patterns pertaining to the China-Taiwan political crisis in President Xi Jinping era and its security implications on East Asia.

1.8. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this research work is Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT). This theory was created in the 1980s by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, (Buzan & Waever, 2003) two members of the so-called Copenhagen School. This idea relates to regional security and provides an opportunity to carry out security research worldwide. It seeks to explain the security dynamics of regions. It argues that states in a given region share a set of security concerns, which creates a regional security complex (Amable, 2022). It suggests a regional security model that enables analysis, justification, and forecasting of how the situation would evolve in a certain area. It is predicated on the idea that the best foundation for performing security evaluations is at the regional level rather than the global or one-state level.

Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's RSCT posits that patterns of amity and enmity form a crucial variable in understanding the security dynamics within a regional security complex (RSC) (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 39). This variable moves beyond a purely materialist focus on the distribution of power, acknowledging the significant role of socially constructed

relationships in shaping security interdependence. These patterns are not simply reflections of power dynamics, though the distribution of power can certainly influence them. Instead, they are historically derived realities, imbued with their own momentum and stickiness. The specific configuration of who fears whom and who aligns with whom within an RSC is generally generated internally through a complex interplay of history, politics, and material conditions, rather than being solely imposed by the global system. Long-standing enmities rooted in historical conflicts or divergent identities, alongside contemporary political rivalries and shared or competing material interests, contribute to the formation of these durable patterns of amity and enmity. These patterns, in turn, are path-dependent, meaning that past interactions and established perceptions often become the most significant factors in explaining present relationships (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 49).

In the context of studying an RSC, the variable of amity and enmity is central to defining the complex itself. An RSC is characterized by a group of units whose major processes of securitization and desecuritization are so interlinked that their security problems cannot be reasonably analyzed or resolved in isolation. The intensity of security interdependence, manifested through the patterns of who poses threats to whom and who offers support or alliance, is what distinguishes an RSC from its surrounding environment. Therefore, analyzing the prevalent patterns of amity and enmity allows scholars to map the boundaries of an RSC and understand the primary security dynamics at play. RSCT, with its constructivist leanings, emphasizes that these patterns are contingent on the security practices of the actors within the region. The acts of securitization, the process by which issues are framed as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures are driven by these underlying patterns of amity and enmity (Buzan & Waever, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, understanding who is securitizing what against whom reveals the operationalization of these relational dynamics within the RSC

Similarly, a regional security complex refers to a group of states whose security concerns are interconnected, marked by both cooperation and competition in their security dynamics. Therefore, any security challenge or conflict within the region affects the security of all states within the complex. This theory has evolved over the course of its nearly 40 years of existence. For example, one change was to broaden the scope of sectors (at first, only the political and military sectors were considered), but this theory allowed security issues to be seen from the perspective of relationships that occur at the social, environmental, or economic levels. During their security research, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever questioned the established view that addressed this issue exclusively from a political and military viewpoint. Instead, they adopted

a broader perspective, suggesting that it should be analyzed through five key dimensions: political, military, economic, social, and environmental.

It operates under an assumption that security studies should start at the regional level. A state's national security is too limited, but international security is more broad view since it depended on relations between states. The state viewpoint also has a tendency to put the state "at the center" of affairs. However, because security issues differ and are not equally integrated around the world, the global perspective is very wide and general. They also vary depending on the location. Most activities related to international security, however, take place at the regional level. This level acts as a bridge between national and global security, highlighting the interdependence between the two. States are the main actors in international relations, according to the RSC theory, because they create regions and carry out the securitization and desecuritization processes. Since the regional security complex is an analytical tool socially constructed based on the actions of actors in the international environment in the security context, it is not always the same as a geographical region. Such a region may change based on what they choose to secure.

A regional security complex refers to a group of entities whose security issues are closely connected, making it impossible to analyze or address their security challenges separately from one another.

According to RSCT, a RSC is defined by three factors:

- 1) The geographical location of the states in the region.
- 2) The similarities in their culture.
- 3) The nature of their security threats.

These three factors interact to create a set of shared security concerns that define the regional security complex.

As China and Taiwan are connected in a security complex along with other regional states, any crisis or potential military conflict between both the states could lead to destabilization within the region and affect each other's security as well as security of the neighboring states. Thus, RSCT is the apt theoretical lens to utilize because it revolves around the concept of security dynamics.

Applying RSCT to the China-Taiwan issue, we can examine how it helps us to understand the security dynamics and interactions between these two actors.

First of all, the RSCT begins by defining the region of analysis and in this particular topic, the region would encompass East Asia, including neighboring states like Japan, South Korea and South East Asian countries. These countries are connected through economic political and security relationships.

According to RSCT, states are interdependent on each other for their security. In the context of China and Taiwan, their security interdependence is evident and due to their geographical proximity and historical, cultural and economic ties.

RSCT argues that state within a region form a regional security complex, characterized by shared security perceptions, relationships and patterns of behavior. In this case, china and Taiwan are part of East Asian regional security complex. Both states perceive each other as key security actors and their actions and policies are influenced by their interaction within this complex.

RSCT emphasizes the concept of a security dilemma, where measures taken by one state to strengthen its security may be perceived as a threat by others, potentially triggering a cycle of heightened insecurity. In this context, China's efforts to assert its territorial claims over Taiwan and building up its military capabilities can be seen as a response to its perceived security concerns. However, these actions raise concerns in Taiwan and other neighboring states, leading to a potential security dilemma.

Therefore, applying RSCT helps in understanding the potential risks and challenges involved and provides a framework for studying the impact of various actors and factors on regional security.

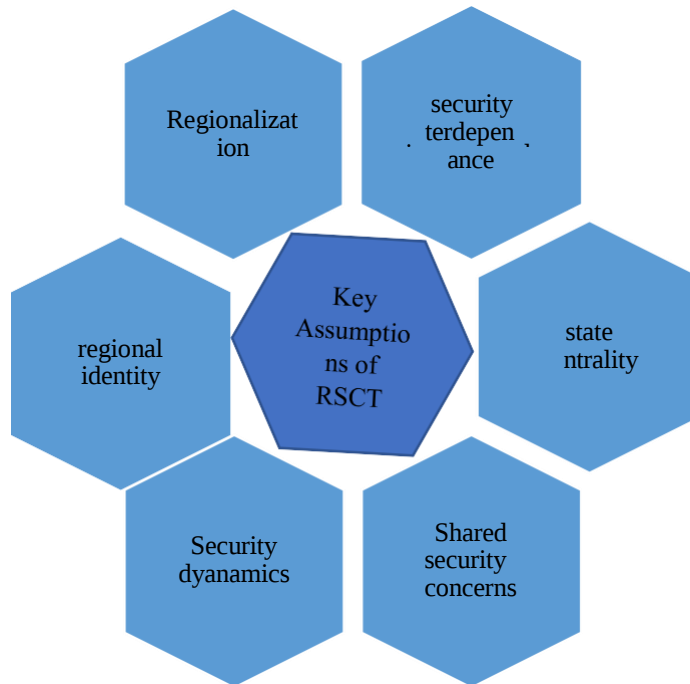


Figure 4.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Hence, in the context of the present study, the variable of amity and enmity is particularly salient. The protracted and complex relationship between China and Taiwan is a central axis of enmity within the potential East Asian RSC (Buzan & Waeber, 2003, p. 95). This relationship is deeply rooted in historical narratives of unification and division, ideological differences, and competing claims of sovereignty (Buzan & Waeber, 2003, p. 148). The securitization of Taiwan by China, particularly concerning any moves towards formal independence or alterations to the status quo, drives much of the security dynamic in the sub-complex and increasingly across East Asia. Simultaneously, Taiwan's own securitization narratives often focus on the perceived threat from the mainland's military capabilities and political intentions. The patterns of amity, or lack thereof, also extend to other actors in the region. For instance, concerns about China's rising power and assertiveness have fostered closer security ties among some Southeast Asian nations and with actors like the United States and Japan, potentially forming a balancing dynamic. These regional responses to China's perceived posture, shaped by historical memories and current territorial disputes, illustrate how patterns of amity and enmity are evolving and contributing to the broader security implications for East Asia. RSCT provides a valuable framework for analyzing how the specific pattern of enmity between China and Taiwan interacts with the wider regional dynamics of fear, threat perception, and potential alliance formation to shape the security landscape of East Asia (Buzan & Waeber, 2003, p. 39). The question of whether the emergent East Asian complex

will solidify into a conflict formation or evolve towards a security regime is heavily dependent on the future trajectory of these patterns of amity and enmity, particularly concerning China's role and its relationship with Taiwan and its neighbours.

1.9. Organization of the Study

This study is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: Origin, Evolution and Political History of China-Taiwan Relations

This chapter delves into the historical development and political evolution of the China-Taiwan relationship, providing a comprehensive analysis of key milestones and dynamics.

Chapter Three: The Emergence of China-Taiwan Crisis: The Reflection of the United States Role

This chapter examining the role of the United States, this chapter investigates how its involvement has contributed to the emergence and intensification of the China-Taiwan crisis, shedding light on geopolitical implications.

Chapter Four: The China-Taiwan Crisis in Xi Jinping era: Implications for East Asian Region

Focusing on the Xi Jinping era, this chapter scrutinizes the security crisis between China and Taiwan, exploring its implications for the broader East Asian region and regional stability.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

Presenting the research findings, this chapter discusses the key discoveries and insights gleaned from the analysis, providing a platform for in-depth discussion and interpretation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter synthesizes the key findings, highlights their significance, and offers insights into potential avenues for future research, encapsulating the overall contributions of the study.

CHAPTER 2

ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

2. Introduction

The Republic of China (ROC), now known as Taiwan, was established on the Chinese mainland in 1911. The KMT, or Nationalist Party, led the ROC. It fought a civil war against the Communist Party of China (CPC). After major defeats by CPC forces, the ROC government, led by Chiang Kai-shek, retreated to Taiwan between 1948 and 1949. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong, the Chairman of the Communist Party, proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In the same year, the ROC imposed restrictions on contact and travel between residents of Taiwan and mainland China (Matsumoto, 2018).

This shift in governance occurred against the backdrop of Taiwan's history under Japanese occupation, a period marked by the complexities typical of colonial legacies. During this period, many Taiwanese found themselves both as soldiers and collaborators in Japan's war efforts, while simultaneously suffering from colonial practices that suppressed their culture and punished dissent (A. Elleman, 2019). Unresolved issues with Japan remain, such as unpaid pensions for Taiwanese soldiers who served in the Japanese Imperial Army, the repatriation of soldiers' remains, and reparations for the surviving women subjected to sexual slavery during that period (Maizland, 2024). The end of Japanese rule gave way to the Republic of China becoming Taiwan's new government, bringing with it a mix of hope and anxiety for a populace long under foreign control. Despite approximately 75 years having passed since the occupation, Japanese cultural influences remain evident throughout the island, and Taiwan's extensive history of colonization continues to shape its future (Lee-Divito, 2021).

2.1. Historical Perspective of China-Taiwan Relations

Taiwan's history is divided into five key periods. These include Dutch Rule (1624–1662), the Kingdom of Tungning (1661–1683), Qing Dynasty Rule (1683–1895), Japanese Rule (1895–1945), and the Republic of China Rule (1945 to present). Prior to Dutch colonization, Taiwan was inhabited by Taiwanese aboriginals who spoke Austronesian languages and established early kingdoms (L. Osborn, 2016). During the Age of Exploration, the Dutch East India Company¹

¹ The Dutch East India Company (VOC), established in the seventeenth century, played a pivotal role in the development of global capitalism. It was the first multinational joint-stock company and introduced innovative practices like issuing tradable shares. Supported by the financial revolution in Europe, including the creation of the first stock exchange in Amsterdam, the VOC gained a competitive edge. This company significantly reshaped trade by combining political and managerial efforts, dominating trade routes in the East Indies. At its peak, the VOC

initiated colonization in southwestern Taiwan in 1624, establishing the first systematic regime on the island (Lee , 2014). At that time, the population consisted primarily of Taiwanese aboriginals with a small number of Chinese immigrants. To address the labor shortage needed for developing the colony, the Dutch authorities encouraged Chinese immigration² for farming, marking the first large-scale influx of Chinese settlers into Taiwan (Mack, 2022).

Moreover, in 1626, the Spanish established a colony in northern Taiwan. Facing economic pressure, the Spanish government began reducing its military presence in northern Taiwan by 1637 and ultimately withdrew after being defeated by the Dutch in 1642. The Dutch gained control of Taiwan and built Fort Zeelandia and Fort Provintia in present-day Tainan City, making it their administrative center. Economically, the Dutch emphasized trade with China, Japan, and Southeast Asia (Ferhat, 2006). They obtained silk and porcelain from China to trade with Japan and European nations. In addition, they developed agriculture in Taiwan, focusing on sugarcane cultivation. The sugar produced was exported to Japan, Persia, and Batavia.

The Dutch also attempted to convert the Taiwanese aboriginals to Christianity. They established schools and taught them to write their native languages using romanized scripts. Missionaries compiled dictionaries and catechisms, contributing to the creation of a written language in Taiwan (Duzor, 2022). Aboriginals used this written form for contracts with Chinese immigrants (ethnic “Han”), providing valuable resources for researchers studying aboriginal society today. In the Southeast Asian waters, Zheng Zhi-long was a powerful figure and pirate. To gain his support, the Ming Dynasty granted him an official position, boosting his authority over maritime activities and allowing him to compete with other fleets. The Dutch East India Company was one of his main rivals and often clashed with his forces (Wees, 2020).

2.2. History of Taiwan

In 1624, when the Dutch East India Company arrived in Taiwan, they found no evidence of Ming Dynasty control. The Ming ruled China from 1368 to 1644. In 1622, the Dutch had built a small fortress in the Pescadores. However, the Ming Tianqi Emperor ordered them to leave, saying they were outside the empire’s borders. The Dutch then moved to Formosa (modern-day Taiwan) and governed for 38 years, establishing the island’s first administrative system.

employed over 30,000 people, setting a benchmark for other European East India companies (Vergne, 2018; Clulow & Mostert, 2018).

² The reasons for Chinese migration between 1450 and 1750 were diverse and included economic opportunities, escaping political instability, and the search for fertile land. In the case of Taiwan, Chinese settlers were drawn by its agricultural potential and resources, especially after the island’s colonization by the Dutch in 1624. Additionally, internal pressures in Ming China, such as population growth and limited arable land, encouraged migration to nearby regions like Taiwan, where opportunities for trade and farming were more abundant (Bilder, 1996).

Therefore, Taiwan was never part of the Ming Dynasty. Dutch rule ended in 1662 when Koxinga, a Ming loyalist fleeing the Qing Dynasty, launched an expedition with 400 ships and 25,000 men from Fujian. He besieged the Dutch fortress Zeelandia (Wees, When Taiwan was China's (for seven years), 2018). Following a nine-month blockade, the Dutch surrendered, and Koxinga took control of southwestern Taiwan.



Figure No. 1 China Taiwan Map (Shutterstock, 2023).

Koxinga's rule lasted 21 years, ending in 1683 when his grandson surrendered to Qing forces at the Battle of Penghu. He and his heirs governed Taiwan as the independent Kingdom of Tungning, separate from the already fallen Ming Dynasty. At that time, the Qing emperor aimed to dismantle the Koxinga regime, not annex the island. In 1683, the Kangxi Emperor clearly stated that Taiwan was outside the empire and of minimal significance, even proposing the possibility of returning it to the Dutch. This historical fact may pose a challenge for the current authorities in Beijing (Ye, 2013). In 1683, Taiwan became part of Fukien province, governed indirectly by the Manchu rulers in Beijing. The Qing dynasty oversaw Taiwan for over 200 years. During this

time, more than 100 rebellions were recorded. Some required over 50,000 troops to suppress. Taiwanese historians note that uprisings occurred every three years, and rebellions every five. The local population regarded the Manchu as foreign colonizers. They had little interest in joining China (Dawley, 2021).

In 1887, near the end of the Qing Dynasty, the Manchu rulers in Beijing upgraded Taiwan from a Fukien dependency to a formal province of China. This move aimed to thwart French and Japanese colonization efforts. Governor Liu Mingchuan, appointed by Beijing, was instrumental in Taiwan's development. He introduced electricity, initiated a railway from Keelung to the south, and established a telegraph network. However, this modernization lasted just eight years (Xinhua, 2022). After Japan's victory in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War, the Qing government agreed to permanently cede Taiwan to Japan through the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In response, Taiwan's elites, including Governor Tang Jingsong, joined with local gentry to declare the independent Formosa Republic, seeking to resist Japanese control. However, the republic was quickly crushed by Japan's superior military force. Despite this, strong resistance remained, especially from local militias in central and southern Taiwan. The population showed little desire to become part of Japan (Brusadelli, 2023).

a) Taiwan: Treaty of Shimonoseki

The war between China and Japan, triggered by their conflict over Korea, ended in China's defeat and the signing of the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. Under the representation of Viceroy Li Hongzhang, the Qing government conceded Korea's independence, permanently ceded Taiwan and Penghu to Japan, agreed to a large war indemnity, and opened port-cities for trade. The treaty came as a complete surprise to Taiwan; neither the populace nor local officials had been consulted. On May 23, 1895, Governor Tang Jingsong was persuaded by local gentry to declare the independent Formosa Republic, marking the first Asian republic. A new government was established on May 25, 1895 (Savitz, 2023). During this brief eight-year period, while Taiwan was nominally ruled as a province of China, it also laid the groundwork for a distinct Taiwanese identity, blending Aboriginal, Hakka, and Hokkien cultural heritages. Early settlers, primarily engaged in agriculture and local trade, along with the gentry, exhibited a strong inclination towards independence, resisting foreign control on numerous occasions. The influx of intellectuals and literati in the late 1880s, escaping the restrictive environment in Beijing under Manchu rule, further enriched this mix, contributing to the establishment of the Formosa Republic and early resistance against Japanese rule (Pastreich, 2005).

In 1895, Taiwan became a Japanese colony. Over the next twenty years, local Hoklo, Hakka, and indigenous groups led several rebellions. Despite this, the Japanese made significant infrastructure improvements. They built roads, railways, harbors, hospitals, and schools. The Japanese occupation of Taiwan was ostensibly guided by policies of "assimilation" and "equal treatment under one imperial view," envisioning Taiwan as an extension of Japan itself. In reality, Japanese authorities suppressed resistance violently, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Taiwanese, while collaborating with local elites to consolidate their control over the island. By the 1920s, Taiwan had developed into a prosperous model colony with a strong educational system and healthcare, albeit under strict governance (Laak, 2024).

The investments made in Taiwan's infrastructure and economy were chiefly aimed at serving Japanese industrialists, merchants, and military interests. These developments facilitated the transportation of military personnel and equipment to Taiwan while facilitating the export of Taiwanese goods to Japan. In the 1920s and 1930s, while Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong competed for control in China, both the Nationalists and Communists largely ignored Taiwan. Reports suggest that both Chiang and Mao supported Taiwan's independence from Japan during this period. However, their views shifted between 1942 and 1943. Prior to the November 1943 Cairo Conference, Chiang Kai-shek began advocating for Taiwan's "reincorporation into China." Similarly, Chinese Communist Party leaders made similar claims (Haoze, 2022).

b) Taiwan: Political Dynamics

Taiwan functions as a de facto state. Many countries avoid formal diplomatic ties and refrain from making sovereignty-related references in official exchanges. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, also known as the Taipei Representative Office, acts as Taiwan's de facto embassy abroad. Taiwan faces significant challenges in gaining membership in international organizations, particularly the United Nations and its agencies (Dawley, 2021). When permitted to participate in a limited capacity, Taiwan is often designated as "Chinese Taipei" and does not enjoy full membership rights. The status of Taiwan, its name, and its statehood remain contentious issues in international relations. This intricate situation is influenced by global power relations, such as the interests of the United States, the PRC's insistence on the "One China Principle," and the broader international community's support for this position (Lin & Wu, 2022).

Following World War II, control of Taiwan was restored from Japan, which had been defeated, to the Republic of China (ROC) on the mainland, as stipulated in the Cairo Declaration (November 27, 1943) and subsequently reaffirmed in the Japanese Peace Treaty signed in San Francisco. A continuing debate exists, especially in Western circles, concerning whether the ROC

maintained its status as a sovereign state after the People's Republic of China (PRC) asserted itself as the exclusive legitimate government of China. However, opinions on this matter remain divided (Holzer, 2023). The more complex and disputed issue concerns whether the current government in Taiwan can be considered a sovereign state. By most definitions, Taiwan fulfills the basic criteria for statehood: it has an effective and independent government capable of governing within a clearly defined territory. However, the question of Taiwanese sovereignty is highly complicated, shaped by political dynamics. Scholars have debated and explored this topic for over six decades, examining the definition and implications of sovereignty in the context of Taiwan (Winkler, 2012).

Sovereignty refers to a state's right to govern itself without external interference, requiring an effective government, clear territorial boundaries, and control over internal affairs like politics, economy, and security. It is a core principle of international law that governs the relationships between states in areas such as trade, human rights, and peace. However, globalization has made sovereignty more complex, as states must balance their autonomy with the need for global cooperation (Somers, 2023). Taiwan's situation highlights these complexities: in January 1979, the U.S. recognized Beijing and accepted the "One China" policy, asserting Taiwan as part of China's territory, yet without endorsing "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan." This diplomatic shift reduced official support for Taiwan from key allies like the U.S., but Taiwan continues to assert its sovereignty through its independent government, economy, and military. This situation underscores the tension between sovereignty, international recognition, and the challenges posed by geopolitical dynamics in the modern world (JUE, 2011).

Recognizing Taiwan's strategic, economic, and commercial importance, the US determined that maintaining a sustained presence on the island through commercial, cultural, and other forms of engagement would be beneficial, despite refraining from formal diplomatic recognition or official government representation. In April 1979, the US Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). This law set the framework for unofficial relations with Taiwan. The TRA formalized the US commitment to Taiwan. It also required providing defense articles and services. This ensured the enhancement of Taiwan's defense. It highlighted the US's support for Taiwan's security in regional and global contexts (Ferhat, 2006). Since 1986, Taiwan's democratization has been crucial in shaping a more inclusive national identity. Under President Lee Teng-hui, Taiwan built a memorial in Taipei to honor the victims of the February 28 Incident. This marked a key moment in the creation of a "new Taiwanese" identity. This identity encompassed not only the indigenous population but also those who had arrived from the

mainland in the late 1940s, as well as their descendants, reflecting Taiwan's evolving sense of national unity and historical reconciliation.

The development of a distinct Taiwanese identity progressed during the Chen Shui-bian administration. However, it is acknowledged that its definition may continue to evolve over time (Lin & M. Hathaway, 17 July, 2003). The impact of over half a million Taiwanese citizens now residing and working in mainland China on their self-identification remains uncertain and is yet to be fully understood. In 1996, Taiwan marked a significant milestone as it held its first direct presidential election, following constitutional amendments passed two years earlier. This historic event ended decades of colonial and authoritarian rule. Since then, the president and vice president are elected by popular vote, serving four-year terms with a two-term limit, instead of being appointed by the now-dissolved National Assembly (Gao, 2024).

In 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), established in 1986, won the presidential election. This marked Taiwan's first peaceful transfer of power after over 50 years of Kuomintang (KMT) rule. Government changes followed in 2008 and 2016, with the DPP maintaining the presidency in the most recent election in January. The President of Taiwan represents the country internationally and serves as commander-in-chief of the national armed forces, overseeing both diplomacy and defense strategy (Holzer, 2023). As head of state, the President has the authority to appoint the Premier, who leads the Executive Yuan, one of Taiwan's five central government branches. The Premier oversees the Cabinet, which in turn manages 14 ministries, eight councils, and five commissions. Similar to the President's selection of the Premier, the Premier's choice of ministers and other Cabinet members does not require legislative confirmation (Chu & Lin, 2001).

c) Relations between China and Taiwan

Since the KMT and the Republic of China government retreated to Taiwan after their defeat in the Chinese Civil War in 1949, China has maintained its claim over the island through the "One China" policy. Beijing remains committed to reunifying Taiwan with the mainland, even suggesting the use of force if necessary. In contrast, Taiwan's government asserts its sovereignty as the Republic of China, increasingly emphasizing its identity as the Republic of China, Taiwan. Tensions between Taiwan and China grew during Chen Shui-bian's presidency from 2000 to 2008, as he pushed for Taiwanese independence, despite his efforts to maintain positive relations with Beijing (Reuters, 2024). Relations between Taiwan and China improved notably after Ma Ying-jeou, of the KMT, became president in 2008 and was re-elected in 2012. The breakthrough

came in late 2015, when Ma held a historic meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Singapore, marking a key diplomatic milestone.

In 2014, Taiwan witnessed the Sunflower Movement, where hundreds of students occupied the parliament for weeks. They protested the perceived lack of transparency in trade deals with China. This movement highlighted the increasing anti-China sentiment on the island (Ying-ying, 2019). Since Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took office in 2016 and was re-elected in 2020, Taiwan's relationship with China has sharply declined. In retaliation, China halted formal communication, held military drills near Taiwan, pressured global companies to recognize Taiwan as part of China, and decreased Taiwan's diplomatic allies. Despite these tensions, China remains Taiwan's largest trade partner, with bilateral trade hitting \$224 billion in 2023, and Taiwan continues to enjoy a significant trade surplus (Haoze, 2022).

China opposes Taiwan's inclusion in UN agencies and other international organizations for sovereign states. Taiwan regularly protests its exclusion, while the United States has consistently backed Taiwan's active participation in these organizations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan criticized the World Health Organization (WHO) for yielding to Beijing's pressure, which continued to prevent Taiwan from attending the World Health Assembly as an observer, despite its effective early response. Ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) nations have also advocated for Taiwan's inclusion in WHO discussion (Maizland, 2024). Although excluded from many international organizations, Taiwan belongs to over forty groups, primarily regional ones. These include the Asian Development Bank, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Taiwan also holds observer or other statuses in several international organizations. Currently, only twelve countries maintain official diplomatic relations with Taiwan. In March 2023, Honduras severed ties with Taiwan and recognized China, followed by Nauru, a Pacific Island nation, in January 2024, shortly after Taiwan's presidential election. No government has ever established formal diplomatic relations with both China and Taiwan at the same time (BBC, 2024).

d) Taiwan Strait Crisis between China and Taiwan (1949-1958)

In 1949, as the Republic of China (ROC) retreated from mainland China, it imposed a naval blockade against the People's Republic of China (PRC). Although the Nationalist navy was sizable, its primary role was to protect Taiwan's coastal borders. To enforce the blockade, the Nationalists collaborated with various guerrilla groups stationed on offshore islands near the

Chinese coast.. Subsequently, the United States Navy supported Taiwan's defense efforts, providing military aid, particularly aircraft, which enabled air patrols to enforce the blockade. This blockade persisted from 1949 until 1958. In October 1949, a Communist offensive against the Nationalist-controlled Jinmen Island (Quemoy) was unsuccessful. Although facing naval and air disadvantages, Communist forces managed to capture vital Nationalist strongholds. These included Hainan Island from February to April 1950, the Zhoushan Archipelago in May 1950, and Tatan Island by July 1950. By the summer of 1950, the Nationalists had lost key island bases in the Bo Hai, near the Yangtze River's mouth, as well as Hainan Island (A. Elleman, *The Taiwan Strait Crises (1954–55 and 1958)*, 2019).

The islands in the Taiwan Strait were strategically significant due to their closeness to both China and Taiwan, and their role in the Chinese Civil War. Jinmen (Quemoy), only two miles from Xiamen on the Chinese mainland, and Mazu, located ten miles from Fuzhou, lie about one hundred miles west of Taiwan. After the Nationalist Government of the Republic of China (ROC), led by Chiang Kai-shek, acknowledged its loss of mainland control during the Civil War, officials and portions of the Nationalist Army fled to Taiwan (L. Osborn, 2016). The Nationalists set up garrisons on Jinmen, Mazu, and the Dachen Islands. In the early 1950s, Chiang's forces launched small raids from Jinmen and Mazu against the mainland. Both sides saw these islands as key points for an ROC invasion to reclaim the mainland. Control of these islands was crucial for both the Nationalists and the Communists.

US policy in East Asia during the early Cold War worsened tensions in the Taiwan Strait. At first, American officials were willing to let PRC forces cross the Strait and defeat Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government. However, after the Korean War began in June 1950, the US sent its Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait to stop the conflict from spreading. This provoked the Chinese Communists, who shifted troops from Taiwan to Korea. Tensions in the Strait eased temporarily until the Seventh Fleet withdrew after the Korean War. In the years that followed, the US strengthened its alliance with the ROC in Taiwan (A. Madsen, 2001). In 1954, the US led the creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) to unite the region in response to potential Communist dangers.

US officials also contemplated signing a Mutual Defense Treaty with Chiang Kai-shek's ROC government. The PRC viewed these moves as threats to its security and regional power. In retaliation, the PRC initiated bombings of Jinmen in September 1954, eventually expanding their attacks to Mazu and the Dachen Islands. In response, US policymakers considered sending a portion of the US fleet into the Taiwan Strait to ease the rising tensions (BBC, 2024). Their

discussions centered on the potential consequences, such as the risk of rekindling the Chinese Civil War and the effect on US security interests in the region.

While US officials were careful not to directly engage in the conflict, they emphasized the need to preserve ROC control over the islands. Losing Jinmen and Mazu to the PRC would have severely damaged the Nationalist Army's morale and weakened the ROC government's legitimacy in Taiwan. To show its support for the ROC, the US signed the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan. Although the treaty did not specifically mandate US defense of the offshore islands, it pledged assistance in the event of a larger conflict between the ROC and the PRC (Beckley, 2024). The Taiwan Strait situation worsened considerably in late 1954 and early 1955, leading to decisive action by the U.S. government. In January 1955, the U.S. Congress passed the "Formosa Resolution," giving President Eisenhower complete authority to defend Taiwan and the offshore islands.

The U.S. government then publicly reaffirmed its commitment to defend Taiwan from Communist aggression, though it did not define the exact boundaries of its defense perimeter. In return for a private assurance of defense for Jinmen and Mazu, Chiang Kai-shek agreed to pull ROC troops from Dachen, an area that posed strategic uncertainties and defense challenges (Brusadelli, 2023). The Eisenhower Administration explored various strategies to resolve the Taiwan Strait issue, including trying to convince Chiang Kai-shek to relinquish control of the islands and even considering the use of nuclear weapons against the PRC. However, before such extreme measures were necessary, a significant shift occurred at the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung in April 1955, where PRC Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai indicated a willingness to negotiate with the U.S (Chu & Lin, 2001).

The PRC's sudden shift in position may have been driven by Soviet pressure to ease tensions, fears of war with the United States, or changes in domestic politics. In September 1955, discussions between the PRC and the United States began in Geneva. These talks initially centered on the return of nationals, but also addressed ways to avoid further conflict. Despite the PRC's de-escalation in 1955, it resumed shelling Jinmen and Mazu in 1958. This time, the PRC took advantage of global focus on U.S. intervention in Lebanon, blocking ROC efforts to resupply garrisons on the offshore islands (Clark & Clark, 2011). The PRC sought to oppose the continuous US backing of the ROC government. Fearing that losing the islands might weaken Nationalist morale and lead to a Communist takeover of Taiwan, President Eisenhower arranged for the resupply of ROC forces on Jinmen and Mazu. This prompt response stopped the shelling

and eased the crisis. In the end, the PRC and ROC agreed to alternately bombard each other's garrisons, a pattern that lasted for twenty years until US-PRC relations improved (Ferhat, 2006).

2.3. Strain Relations between China and Taiwan

The rivalry between China and the US over Taiwan highlights a typical security dilemma, with each country viewing its actions as defensive, while the other sees them as provocative. Any conflict between China and Taiwan could greatly impact US security interests. The US faces the challenge of supporting Taiwan while avoiding an escalation into a broader conflict with China. Washington has opposed China's efforts to isolate Taiwan, such as blocking its participation in global organizations, interfering in elections, pressuring Taiwanese businesses to reject independence, and imposing sanctions on its industries (BBC, Confrontation Over Taiwan , 2024). Military actions near Taiwan have increased significantly in recent years as China enhances the strength of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The US Department of Defense's 2021 Military Power Report notes that China is focusing on joint long-range precision strikes, advancing space, counter-space, and cyber capabilities, and quickly expanding its nuclear forces (C. Saunders, 2005).

China has also integrated emerging technologies into its military strategy, with an emphasis on intelligent warfare. The Department of Defense report highlights China's aim to lead in technologies linked to the "Fourth Industrial Revolution," including artificial intelligence and quantum computing. The People's Republic of China frequently sends aircraft into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone to demonstrate its power. In 2020, Taiwan reported a Chinese cyberattack targeting ten government agencies in an effort to steal sensitive data (Wang, 2010). The military balance in the Taiwan Strait has changed. This has intensified competition between the US and China. The risk of China using force against Taiwan has increased. To strengthen Taiwan's defense, the Trump administration approved arms sales exceeding \$18 billion. In 2020, the State Department lifted restrictions on US diplomatic ties with Taiwanese officials (Ahmed, 2023).

Since at least 2021, a small but growing number of US Marines have been providing covert training to Taiwan's military (Beckley, 2024). Taiwan is the leading global producer of advanced semiconductors. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) produces 65 percent of the world's semiconductors and 90 percent of the most advanced chips (Lee , 2014). In 2022, at an event in London with MI5 General Director Ken McCallum, FBI Director Christopher Wray warned that a Taiwan invasion would cause "one of the most horrific business disruptions the world has ever seen." He stressed that sanctions against China would severely

damage the global economy, even more than the sanctions imposed after Russia's invasion of Ukraine (C. Saunders, 2005).

Under the Joseph Robinette Biden administration, tensions in the Taiwan Strait have increased. Military strategies are now a primary focus. The Biden administration has continued the aggressive approach from the Donald Trump era. President Biden has repeatedly stated that the US would send troops to defend Taiwan if China invades. In August 2022, Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan. This prompted Beijing to conduct military exercises aimed at "securing" the island (ZHOU, 2022). In 2023, Tsai Ing-wen's visit to the U.S. as a transit agent, along with increased cooperation with the U.S. on war preparations, led to a further escalation of Chinese military exercises around Taiwan. In response, China sold U.S. Treasuries and showed a lukewarm attitude toward U.S. invitations for dialogue. Currently, US forces stationed in Japan and South Korea have been repositioned to the second island chain and Guam, while the Philippines has opened its military bases to the US. Additionally, some Asian countries are planning to evacuate their nationals from Taiwan. Despite a long-standing dynamic balance, the satisfaction levels of the three involved parties—China, Taiwan, and the United States, vary significantly (Duzor, 2022).

2.4. Taiwan's Defense Strategies and Alliances

Taiwan's defense strategies are shaped by the island's unique geopolitical position and the persistent threat from the PRC. One of the core components of Taiwan's defense strategy is its asymmetric warfare approach, designed to offset the overwhelming military superiority of the PRC. This strategy focuses on utilizing advanced technologies, cyber capabilities, and guerrilla tactics to defend against a potential invasion. According to Cole (2016), Taiwan has invested heavily in anti-ship missiles, coastal defense systems, and mobile missile launchers, which can be rapidly deployed and are harder for an enemy to target. This approach aims to create a deterrence by making any potential invasion costly and protracted for the PRC. In addition to technological advancements, Taiwan's defense strategy heavily relies on strengthening its alliances, particularly with the United States.

The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, while not an official defense agreement, obligates the US to provide Taiwan with defensive weapons and retain the ability to counter any attempts to undermine Taiwan's security, social, or economic stability. According to Mark Stokes (2020), US arms exports to Taiwan have included sophisticated fighter jets, missile defense systems, and naval assets, which have greatly strengthened Taiwan's defense capabilities. These arms sales are a critical element of Taiwan's strategy to maintain a credible defense posture

against potential Chinese aggression. Furthermore, Taiwan has sought to diversify its defense partnerships beyond the United States. In recent years, Taiwan has increased its military and strategic cooperation with other regional powers such as Japan and Australia. This cooperation includes joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and the development of joint defense technologies. According to Rossiter (2021), Taiwan's efforts to build these alliances are part of a broader strategy to create a regional security network that can help deter Chinese aggression and ensure the stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Taiwan's defense strategies also encompass civil defense and national resilience measures. The government has launched initiatives to enhance public preparedness for potential military conflicts, including civil defense drills and public education campaigns. The aim is to ensure that the civilian population is ready to support the military in the event of an attack and to minimize the disruption caused by such conflicts. These measures are essential for maintaining public morale and ensuring the overall resilience of Taiwanese society in the face of external threats (Lin, 2019). By combining advanced military strategies, robust international alliances, and comprehensive civil defense measures, Taiwan aims to maintain its sovereignty and security in an increasingly complex and challenging geopolitical environment.

In a nutshell, this chapter has examined the origins, evolution, and political history of China-Taiwan relations, providing essential background for understanding the roots of the current crisis. It has also highlighted the role of the United States in shaping the dynamics of this long-standing conflict. Building on this foundation, the following chapter (Chapter 3) explores into the emergence and intensification of the China-Taiwan political crisis in the Xi Jinping era, with a particular focus on recent developments and the shifting balance of power in the region.

CHAPTER 3

THE EMERGENCE OF CHINA-TAIWAN CRISIS: THE REFLECTION OF THE UNITED STATES ROLE

3 Introduction

The issue of who holds the right to govern China has been contested since the era of Mao Zedong on the mainland and Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan. The People's Republic of China sought to reunify Taiwan to finalize its revolution, while Chiang sought to reclaim the mainland for the Republic of China. In recent years, the idea of a single unified China has become more unclear. Although the PRC's economy has advanced, the political structure established by Mao Zedong more than half a century ago remains largely unchanged. In contrast, Taiwan has transformed over this period, evolving from an authoritarian nation with a backward economy into a thriving democracy based on free markets. This stark contrast in political and economic systems adds complexity to the relationship between the two entities and shapes the ongoing debate over Taiwan's status (M. Campbell & J. Mitchell, 2001). Over the past decade, the core nature of the divide between China and Taiwan has changed, although many in the PRC and some in the US may still view the Taiwan status debate as the concluding phase of a long-standing civil war.

Taiwan's government has endured for nearly 70 years, primarily due to support from the United States. Initially, this support was provided through a mutual security treaty, which later transformed into a political commitment without a formal defense pact, as outlined in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. Taiwan's shift to democracy in 1986 further strengthened its importance as a partner for the US, complicating the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) efforts to reunify Taiwan with the mainland (Murphy, 2022). The conflict between China and Taiwan stems from the 1949 Chinese Civil War. After Mao Zedong's Communist Party emerged victorious, the PRC was founded on the mainland, while the defeated Nationalist Party, under Chiang Kai-shek, fled to Taiwan. The KMT established the ROC government on Taiwan, claiming to be the legitimate government of all of China. This division created a complicated and tense political scenario, with both sides claiming authority over the entire country (Beckley, 2024).

Tensions have persisted due to the PRC's adherence to the "One China" policy, which denies Taiwan's status as a separate nation. The PRC and ROC engaged in several military confrontations in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises in 1954-1955 and 1958. These crises underscored the volatility of the situation, marked by artillery exchanges and military force from both sides. The United States played a pivotal role by providing military aid to Taiwan through the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty, further complicating

the geopolitical environment during this period (D. Swaine & Park, 2024). A precarious ceasefire brought the crisis to an end, but the fundamental dispute over Taiwan's status persisted and simmered under the surface.

As Taiwan became more democratic and increasingly sought formal independence, tensions between China and Taiwan intensified during the 1990s and 2000s. The first democratic presidential elections in Taiwan in 1995-1996, along with then-President Lee Teng-Hui's visit to the United States, triggered the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (Kelter, 2024). In response, the PRC conducted several military exercises and missile tests near Taiwan to intimidate voters and signal its opposition to any moves toward independence. The United States reaffirmed its defense commitment to Taiwan by deploying aircraft carrier combat groups to the region. This period emphasized the fragile and tense nature of cross-strait relations, with both sides trapped in a continuous cycle of provocation and deterrence (Vest & Kratz, 2023).

3.1. Policies and Events: Leads towards China-Taiwan Crisis

Popular support for the Communists grew significantly during World War II. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and American diplomats in China, including Ambassador Patrick J. Hurley, reported that opposition in areas controlled by the Nationalists was being severely suppressed. The Republic of China government became vulnerable to the Communist threat due to these undemocratic practices and widespread corruption during the war. In contrast, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gained support from peasants for its strong resistance against Japanese invaders and early successes in land reform. The Japanese surrender created the conditions for China's civil war to resume. Despite the Nationalist government's flaws, the United States continued to back Chiang Kai-shek's regime, seeing it as the only way to prevent Communist rule and because it had been an ally during the war (Chai, 2010). Tens of thousands of Nationalist Chinese soldiers were transported into Japanese-controlled territory by American forces, who allowed them to accept Japan's surrender.

In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria and set up the puppet state of Manchukuo. After Japan's defeat in World War II in August 1945, the Soviet Union took control of Manchuria. Soviet troops stayed until the Chinese Communist forces asserted their claim, prompting the Soviets to withdraw. In 1945, Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek, leaders of the Communist and Nationalist parties, met to discuss post-war governance. Both agreed on the need for equality among all political parties, a unified military, and democratic principles (A. Madsen, 2001). The truce was short-lived, and by 1946, full-scale civil war erupted between the two sides, despite multiple attempts at negotiation by U.S. General George Marshall. Deep distrust between the

factions blocked efforts to form a coalition government. From 1947 to 1949, as the civil war intensified, the chances of a Communist victory increased (Clark & Clark, 2011).

Although the Communists did not control major cities after World War II, they had large stockpiles of arms seized from Japanese supplies in Manchuria, strong military morale, and widespread popular support. In contrast, public backing for the Nationalist Government had declined due to years of inefficiency and corruption. By early 1947, the ROC Government was already considering Taiwan, an island off Fujian Province, as a possible retreat location. While officials in the Truman Administration doubted the strategic need to maintain ties with Nationalist China, no one in the U.S. government wanted to be blamed for allowing the Communists to take over China (Cabestan, 2017). The Nationalists kept receiving financial and military assistance, but it was less than what Chiang Kai-shek had expected.

Following a series of military successes, Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the PRC in October 1949. Chiang Kai-shek and his troops fled to Taiwan to regroup and strategize for a possible invasion of the mainland. Political dynamics within China, as well as international concerns, created significant barriers to any agreement between the PRC and the US after the creation of the new Chinese state. In August 1949, the Truman administration issued the “China White Paper,” which articulated US policy towards China, emphasizing that the outcome of the civil war could only be decided by Chinese forces (Chen, 2012). Truman’s administration was still blamed for "losing" China. The revolution's incomplete outcome left the Nationalist Army and Government weak and disorganized in Taiwan. This situation led American anti-communists to believe that China’s fate could still be changed.

The outbreak of the Korean War ended any chance of reconciliation between the PRC and the US. The two nations were soon positioned on opposite sides of a larger global conflict. Truman's strategy of supporting Chiang Kai-shek's regime in Taiwan aimed to prevent the Korean War from expanding southward (Chen Y.-J. , 2022). Following the 1949 Chinese Revolution, exchanges were minimal, trade was limited, and no diplomatic relations existed between the two nations for over 20 years. Until the 1970s, the United States recognized the Republic of China in Taiwan as the legitimate government and supported its claim to the Chinese seat at the United Nations (Stošić, 2023).

3.2. China-Taiwan Conflict on Kinmen and Matsu Islands

An important part of the current China-Taiwan issue is the fight over the Kinmen (sometimes called Quemoy) and Matsu islands, which represents the fierce and frequently violent clashes that have characterized cross-strait relations. Since the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949,

the Kinmen and Matsu islands, near China's southeast coast, have been important outposts for Taiwan. These islands are Taiwan's first defense against the PRC and could become flashpoints because of their closeness to the mainland. In the early 1950s, their strategic importance grew during the Cold War (Dalmia, 2023). Under Mao Zedong, the PRC aimed to establish centralized rule over all of China, encompassing Taiwan and its neighboring islands.

The First Taiwan Strait Crisis escalated quickly, gaining widespread international attention. In response, the United States pledged to defend Taiwan from Communist threats by signing the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan in 1954 and sending its Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait. Amid Cold War tensions, this agreement served as a deterrent to large-scale invasion, though it also risked expanding the conflict into a broader war (Lee-Divito, 2021). The First Taiwan Strait Crisis ended without significant territorial changes despite the heavy bombardment and high stakes, but it did create a pattern for future wars. Taiwan maintained sovereignty over the Kinmen and Matsu islands, strengthened by military and geopolitical assistance from the United States. But the crisis also exposed the vulnerability of Taiwan Strait peace and the possibility that regional disputes may turn into global wars.

The Kinmen and Matsu islands became a key focus again during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958. The PRC's resumed artillery strikes on Kinmen, which involved heavier bombardment than in the last crises, set off this battle (Zhao, 2023). The PRC sought to test the boundaries of US backing while undermining Taiwan's military presence and morale. With robust support from the United States, the Nationalist government in Taiwan retaliated with resolute opposition, employing cutting-edge military hardware and American logistical assistance. The United States showed its support for Taiwan during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis by deploying aircraft carriers and other naval troops to the area. In the context of Cold War geopolitics, this display of power highlighted the strategic significance of the islands and the wider Taiwan Strait. During the crisis, novel military tactics were also employed, including airlifting supplies to the beleaguered garrisons on Kinmen (Yang, 2018).

For cross-strait relations, the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis's fierce military clashes had a profound effect. Even though the PRC's artillery bombardment caused significant damage, Taiwan was able to maintain its ground with American assistance, strengthening its defensive posture and discouraging further extensive strikes. The crisis emphasized the vital role that U.S. military and political backing play in upholding the status quo and established the Kinmen and Matsu islands as emblems of Taiwan's resistance against Communist assault. Cross-strait military conflicts witnessed a brief period of relative peace following the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis, but

the underlying tensions persisted (J. Shattuck, 2018). Taiwan maintained and bolstered its defenses on the islands, realizing their strategic and symbolic significance, while the PRC persisted in seeing the Kinmen and Matsu islands as illegal holdouts of the Nationalist government.

The Kinmen and Matsu islands have remained highly militarized and politically sensitive places for decades after the crises. In addition to being Taiwan's military outposts, the islands are also sources of political tension and pride. There have been sporadic clashes and artillery fire exchanges, but Taiwan's military readiness and continuous American assistance have served as a deterrence, preventing major wars (Matsumoto, 2010). Both sides of the China-Taiwan dispute maintain a precarious balance of force and deterrence, which is reflected in the circumstances on the Kinmen and Matsu islands. Taiwan has worked to fortify its defense capabilities and foreign alliances, while the PRC has expanded its campaign to include political and economic pressure on the island republic. The enduring instability and unresolved character of cross-strait ties are shown by the aftermath of the Kinmen and Matsu crises (DePastino, 2008).

In the absence of reinforcement and supplies, the Eisenhower administration feared that the collapse of Kinmen was inevitable. In order to maintain Taiwanese control over the islands, Ike and the Joint Chiefs decided to employ conventional force and send escorts to Chiang's fleet. The US military leadership was ready to use nuclear weapons on the PRC if that didn't work. Escorts from Seventh Fleet to Kinmen were effective. For fear of starting a conflict with the US, communist soldiers refrained from opening fire on the resupply convoys. Even though the daily artillery shelling and armed escorts persisted, the situation had subsided by mid-September (Madoka , 2023). The US was threatening to start a third global war, the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev cried, and he vowed to defend the PRC just as the US had sworn to defend the ROC.

The conflict in the Strait came to a standstill as a result of the ongoing strengthening of Kinmen, the transfer of 155mm howitzers, and the installation of a Nike missile position on Taiwan. The US navy was careful not to go too near to PRC territorial seas, while the Soviet Union cautioned its Chinese partner (A. Elleman, 2021). But rather than completely retreating, the combat between the two factions carried on in the most bizarre manner possible. An unofficial agreement was reached between the PRC and the ROC to bombard each other every day on different days. On odd days, the PRC launched artillery shells at Kinmen, while on even days, Kinmen soldiers shot back. Both sides took refuge in bunkers and at set times every day since they knew exactly where and when the rounds would land. The US established diplomatic ties

with the PRC in 1979, ending the odd-even day phoney war that had lasted for 21 years (H. Halperin, 1996).

3.3. Third Taiwan Crisis (1995-1996): Role of US

The 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis reminded both China and the United States that Taiwan is the most likely trigger for military conflict between the two nations. Since 1950, the United States has been a key player in the ongoing deadlock between China and Taiwan. Taiwan-China relations improved significantly during the 1980s and early 1990s. Growing cross-strait tourism and commercial exchange between Beijing and Taipei in the 1980s led to direct, if unofficial, discussions between the two cities by 1993. However, certain Chinese factions maintained a deep mistrust of Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui, the leader of the KMT, and were highly dubious of American intentions (J. Moore, 2007). The People's Republic of China was incensed when President Lee of Taiwan was granted a visa in May 1995 so that he could go to the US the next month.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (MFA PRC) showed restraint during this time. However, the PLA directed its anger at the MFA PRC and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen. After Lee Teng-hui's provocative speech at Cornell University, where he praised the "Republic of China on Taiwan," military leaders decided to act. In response to Lee's return from the United States, Beijing held an emergency meeting of the Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group (TALSG) in mid-June 1995, which was the main body responsible for Taiwan policy (Scobell, 2000). Three furious military officials confronted the two civilian leaders of the TALSG, Chairman Jiang Zemin and Vice Chair Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, insisting that stronger actions were necessary. Deputy Chief of General Staff Xiong Guangkai, who sits with six civilians—including Jiang, Qian, Wang Daohan, and Wang Zhaoguo—is the only military representative in the body. The two PLA generals with the highest rank, Liu Huaqing and Zhang Zhen, were also there at this time. These men undoubtedly charged the air and made sure that the policy changed quickly (Voloshina, 2023).

Between July 1995 and March 1996, China conducted several military drills and missile launches in the Taiwan Strait. On July 18, 1995, Beijing announced that missile tests would target a region about ninety miles off Taiwan's northern coast. From the mainland, six DF-15 missiles were launched over three consecutive days—July 21, 22, and 23 (two each day). The PLA's naval ships and aircraft carried out live-fire exercises off Fujian's coast for 10 days the following month, after a five-day warning. In mid-November, the PLA's air, land, and naval forces held combined operations in the southern part of the strait (Gunness & C. Saunders, 2022). On March

5, 1996, Beijing revealed plans for more missile tests, aiming at waters under fifty miles from Taiwan's main ports. Three DF-15 missiles were launched from the mainland on March 8. Another DF-15 missile followed five days later.

From March 12 to 25, live-fire exercises and military simulations were conducted off the coast of Fujian, with activities taking place both north and south of the Taiwan Strait. These exercises were carried out after notifying the relevant parties in advance. The exercises featured about 40 navy vessels, 260 aircraft, and 150,000 troops. They also included aerial bombardment and amphibious landing drills. The goal of the summer 1995 military drills was to convey to China how unhappy China was with Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's June visit to the US (S. Ross, 2000). The military maneuvers and missile tests in March 1996 aimed to intimidate Taiwan before its presidential election and punish President Lee, who was expected to win re-election. The main goal was to prevent Taiwan from seeking independence. At the same time, China was sending a strong message to the United States. Beijing showed its determination to reunite Taiwan with China, signaling readiness to use force, regardless of U.S. involvement. This message aimed to deter U.S. support for Taiwan's independence (Gellman, 1998).

In response, Beijing reduced its diplomatic ties with the US, stopped cross-strait talks, and pressured Washington to limit Taiwanese leaders' visits. In July, the PLA launched six ballistic missiles near Taiwan, followed by live-fire drills in the Taiwan Strait in August. China's focus on Taiwan grew after agreeing to brief future visits and a summit between the US and Chinese presidents on October 24. Before Taiwan's legislative elections in November, the PLA held a major naval exercise in October and an amphibious drill on Dongshan Island (Marshall, 2021). Before the March 1996 presidential election, the PLA carried out a large-scale combined amphibious landing practice in the Taiwan Strait and launched ballistic missiles close to Taiwan ports.

To achieve multiple US goals, the initial strategy focused on rebuilding steady relations with China while offering cautious diplomatic criticism. In March 1996, President Bill Clinton positioned two aircraft carrier battle groups near Taiwan to address potential tensions and bolster American confidence amid China's military exercises. This action aimed to sustain stability and prevent further escalation (Lin, Hart, Lu, Price, & Slade, 2023). The US responses were influenced by several factors, including: (1) bureaucratic disagreements and a lack of a unified stance on China policy; (2) the need to maintain US credibility in the region; (3) the intelligence community's belief that China was demonstrating force, not preparing to use it; and (4) limited capabilities of the PLA. To alleviate public concern, the initial response focused on minimizing

the perceived threat, enhancing military readiness, rejecting Chinese requests, and publicizing Taiwan's military exercises. Preparations for the PLA's March 1996 drills included resupplying and strengthening island garrisons, establishing a high-level crisis management team, reassuring the public, and emphasizing strict rules of engagement to minimize escalation risks (R. Turin, 2010).

3.4. Anti-Secession Law (2005): Intervention of US

The Greek historian Thucydides asserted that the international system is inherently composed of unequal entities, with political units varying in power, resources, and defense capabilities. States that survive must implement effective policies and adjust to the realities of power imbalances. Since the ROC's relocation to Taiwan in 1949, it has experienced this dynamic. In recent years, it has become clear that the status quo is not fixed and evolves over time. There is no clear timeline for resolving this issue. Many viewed the passage of the Anti-Secession Law (ASL) by the National People's Congress on March 14, 2005, as a defining moment. This law, especially Article 8, signaled Beijing's stance that unification, or "reunification," was the only acceptable outcome, with secession being unacceptable (J. Bellows, 2008).

The PRC's "hard foot and soft hand" approach was emphasized in *The Beijing Review* in the edition that first addressed the Anti-Secession Law (ASL). The March 24, 2005 issue featured the headline "Appealing for Peace."³ In the same issue, Chen Wen's extended comment on the ASL was titled "Drawing a Line in the Sand." He stated that "non-peaceful means" are a last choice but added, Those in Taiwan advocating for separation from the mainland have received a clear and direct message: this far, and no further. "The ball now is firmly in Taiwan's court," Chen said. It's possible that all parties concerned were surprised by how quickly peaceful interactions across the Taiwan Strait picked up speed following the ASL (ZOU, 2005).

The legislation was crafted to oppose and prevent Taiwan's secession from China, as outlined in Article One. Article Two reaffirms Beijing's "one China" principle, declaring Taiwan an inseparable part of China and rejecting any efforts by Taiwan independence forces to separate Taiwan from China by any means. Article Three asserts that the Taiwan issue is a domestic matter for China, prohibiting external interference. Article Four describes China's reunification as a "sacred duty" for all Chinese people, including those in Taiwan. Article Five emphasizes that "upholding the One China principle" is essential for peaceful reunification. Article Six expresses

³ The phrase "Appealing for Peace" highlights China's diplomatic stance, combining both forceful measures and peaceful appeals in response to the passage of the Anti-Secession Law.

Beijing's willingness to pursue peaceful unification through measures such as increasing cross-strait exchanges in culture, economy, education, science and technology, health, and sports, as well as collaborating on crime prevention (Ji, 2006).

Article Seven outlines various topics for negotiation during cross-strait consultations, with discussions to be held on an "equal footing." Article Eight specifies that if secessionist forces lead to Taiwan's separation from China, if significant incidents related to Taiwan's secession occur, or if peaceful reunification efforts are exhausted, the State Council and the Central Military Commission will decide on and implement non-peaceful measures to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Article Nine affirms that China will make every effort to protect the lives, property, and rights of Taiwanese citizens, as well as foreign nationals in Taiwan and Taiwanese civilians elsewhere in China, if non-peaceful measures are required. Lastly, Article Ten stipulates that the law will take effect upon its promulgation (Wu, 2016).

a) Consequences of Anti-Secession Law

The PRC enacted the Anti-Secession Law in 2005, which profoundly affected relations between China and Taiwan. Beijing views Taiwan's declaration of independence as a separatist effort, and the legislation specifically permitted the use of "non-peaceful means" against Taiwan in such event. The goal of this legislative move was to prevent Taiwan from making a formal declaration of independence, but in the process, it increased tensions between the two sides and had a big impact on regional stability and global diplomacy. The Anti-Secession Law, first and foremost, strengthened Taiwan's position on preserving its *de facto* independence. The measure was viewed as a direct challenge to Taiwan's democratic government and independence (Ding, 2010). President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan at the time led the government's response, denouncing the measure as an intimidation tactic. The populace in Taiwan, who was mainly against unification on Beijing's conditions, found resonance with this statement.

As a result, the bill not only did not succeed in bringing Taiwan any closer to reunification, but it actually strengthened popular sentiment in favor of maintaining Taiwan as it is. By affecting election results and policy choices, the legislation also had an effect on internal politics in Taiwan. In the subsequent elections, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which has consistently advocated for Taiwan's independence, emerged victorious due to the perceived threat posed by Beijing's law (Clarke, 2024). This shift in political power marked a departure from the KMT's previous, more conciliatory stance. The DPP's rise to power complicated cross-strait dialogue, signaling to Beijing that an increasing number of Taiwanese were embracing a distinct Taiwanese

identity. The Anti-Secession Law drew criticism from numerous countries and organizations worldwide, including the European Union and the United States.

These organizations believed that such developments will destabilize East Asia and maybe spark a war with far-reaching repercussions (J. Tkacik Jr. , 2011). Under the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States in particular reiterated its commitment to Taiwan's defense, sending a message to Beijing that any aggressive actions against Taiwan would probably encounter pushback from other countries. Beijing's legislative action has wider geopolitical ramifications, as seen by this foreign outcry. In terms of commerce and investment across the strait, the bill had a mixed effect. The underlying political tensions fostered an environment of uncertainty even as China and Taiwan's economic interdependence grew. Businesses in Taiwan started to exercise greater caution when making investments on the mainland, and they made more of an effort to diversify their commercial relationships in order to lessen their dependency on China (C. Bush, 2005).

Despite the financial advantages of cross-strait commerce, Taiwan's economic participation has become more circumspect and calculated as a result of the political concerns highlighted by the Anti-Secession Law. The law also had an impact on East Asian regional security dynamics. South Korea and Japan in particular were keenly watching the events and transforming their security plans as necessary. In anticipation of a possible future conflict in the Taiwan Strait, these countries have enhanced their defense capabilities and pursued closer security partnerships with the US. As a result, the Anti-Secession Law not only worsened ties between China and Taiwan but also had unintended consequences for the larger regional security framework (Pham, 2024).

3.5. US' Response to ASL (2005)

In response to China's 2005 Anti-Secession Law, the US expressed both strategic reaffirmation of its commitments in East Asia and alarm. Washington viewed this law as provocative since it allowed for the employment of “non-peaceful means” against Taiwan that it sought official independence, potentially upending the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and destabilizing the surrounding area. The United States' response was complex, including military, diplomatic, and strategic components intended to uphold regional stability and promote Taiwan's security. The US administration promptly denounced the Anti-Secession Law in a diplomatic manner. Bush administration figures, such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, openly attacked the bill, calling it unhelpful and maybe dangerous for maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait (J. Tkacik Jr. , 2011).

Washington called on Beijing to refrain from actions that might escalate tensions. It stressed the importance of dialogue and peaceful settlement of cross-strait disputes. This approach was in line with the US's longstanding position on the Taiwan issue. The US also reiterated its commitment to Taiwan's defense under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979. The TRA mandates that the US provide Taiwan with defensive arms and ensure the protection of its security and stability (Lewis, 2024). The US reacted to the Anti-Secession Law by reaffirming its support for Taiwan and warning Beijing that any attempt to overthrow the current government would face strong resistance. The US also bolstered its military presence and readiness in the Asia-Pacific region through various measures.

This involved holding joint drills, stepping up military cooperation with Taiwan, and making sure US soldiers in the area were ready to fight back in the event of a possible confrontation. The overall strategy to deter aggression and preserve stability amid rising Chinese assertiveness included deploying advanced weapons and reinforcing alliances with regional partners like Japan and South Korea. Furthermore, the United States ramped up its global diplomatic efforts after the Anti-Secession Law was passed. Washington aimed to unite its allies in supporting Taiwan's democracy while countering China's expanding influence (Khayat, 2019). As part of this, negotiations were held with the European Union and other democratic countries to present a united front against any unilateral moves to alter the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

The United States underscored the significance of global unity in confronting the obstacles presented by China's legislative measures. In addition, the U.S. response to the Anti-Secession Law highlighted Taiwan's strategic significance within the larger framework of U.S.-China ties. Washington made it plain that Taiwan's security and stability were non-negotiable even as it worked to manage its complicated relationship with Beijing, which included substantial economic reliance and collaboration on international problems. A fundamental component of the larger U.S. policy to strike a balance between engagement with China and preventing assertive moves that endangered regional peace and security was the Anti-Secession Law (J. Green & S. Glaser, 2017).

3.6. Hong Kong Protests (2019-2020): Role of US

In February 2019, the Hong Kong government introduced the Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Legislation (Amendment) Bill. The bill aimed to simplify extradition to mainland China and other regions. It also sought to improve legal cooperation on criminal matters. The bill focused on fugitives wanted in Macau, Taiwan, and

mainland China. Extradition to mainland China had been banned by laws before the 1997 handover. This bill marked a significant change in policy (Wang & Ma, 2021). The government proposed the Bill in February 2019. It was open for public comment from February 12 to March 4, 2019. Around 3,000 submissions supported the bill, while 1,400 opposed it.

The proposed bill sparked strong opposition in Hong Kong, resulting in large-scale protests, acts of vandalism, and the occupation of Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Chinese University of Hong Kong. The protests, often called "social unrest," began in June 2019 and persisted until February 2020. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020 diverted public attention to the growing health crisis. As a result, the intensity of the unrest somewhat diminished. However, protesters continued to voice their opposition, particularly against the government's establishment of clinics and quarantine camps, often wearing black clothing and face masks, including gas masks (Ho, 2023). Furthermore, because the government did not completely respond to their requests, the newly formed health professional unions encouraged strikes in public hospitals throughout the pandemic.

The Extradition Bill caused intense unrest in Hong Kong. The protests lasted for months and involved large crowds. Many protesters were arrested, and widespread vandalism occurred. The Mass Transit Railway suffered significant damage. Around 4,000 petrol bombs were found at Hong Kong Polytechnic University after protesters occupied it. Police were accused of using excessive force. They fired over 16,000 tear gas canisters and 10,000 rubber bullets during the protests (H. Tung & Kasuya, 2021). Upon closer inspection, the social movement has seven distinct characteristics. First, economic considerations are often the cause of social discontent. For example, the Yellow Vest Movement in France in 2018 and the increase in transportation fares in Chile in 2019 were both sparked by the rising cost of living and rising gasoline prices.

Secondly, people from various backgrounds joined the protests. These included middle-class citizens and professionals like teachers, social workers, healthcare workers, and IT specialists (Tang, 2021). For instance, a young woman who graduated with First Class Honors as a designer was recently given a jail sentence for having petrol bombs in her hands. Thirdly, many college and high school students actively took part in the protests. University students have a long history of joining social movements, such as anti-Vietnam War rallies. Surprisingly, a significant number of high school students also joined the campaign. By January 2020, 7,019 people had been arrested, with nearly 40% being students. The number of student arrests increased steadily since September 2019, according to the Commissioner of Police (Scharf, D. McCarthy, & G. Dore, 2021)

Third, no group takes ownership of the social gathering, with the exception of those organizers who request permission to hold demonstrations. It was said during a number of protests and strikes that the decisions made on the website were made by "netizens," who orchestrated the actions without the assistance of formal groups. However, the organized scheduling and resource management of many protests and strikes make it unlikely that the movement was entirely volunteer-driven or led by amateurs. For instance, it is simple to get instruction manuals and training materials for protests and strikes from the Internet (Hung, 2021).

Fourth, the protests caused widespread vandalism and significant damage. Repair costs are estimated at HK\$65 million for 740 traffic signals, 52.8 kilometers of railings, and 21,800 square meters of pavement. Businesses owned by those opposing the protests were targeted, along with 85 Mass Transit Railway stations and 68 Light Railway stations. People with differing political views were attacked and doxxed. Notable incidents included the destruction of the Legislative Council building on July 1, 2019, and the occupations of Chinese University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Polytechnic University in November 2019 (K. Chan, 2021). Furthermore, it was not unusual for members of the movement to "settle" interpersonal disputes informally by using physical force and derogatory words.

Fifth, there was a lack of public criticism of violence and vandalism despite their extreme manifestations. Even now, there are many who advocate using violence in the social movement. For instance, a study revealed that over half of pro-democracy respondents favored using laser pointers against the police, while over 20% of respondents supported using violence as a tactic (R. Maguire, 2021).

Lastly, there is a strong political component to the social gathering. With the motto "Five demands, not one less," the campaign has progressively transformed from its initial protest against the Extradition Bill. The demands are as follows: "dual universal suffrage, meaning for both the Legislative Council and the Chief Executive"; "full withdrawal of the extradition bill"; "retracting the classification of protesters as 'rioters'"; "amnesty for arrested protesters"; and "an independent commission of inquiry into alleged police brutality." Additionally, as the social gathering progressed, the phrase "Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of our time" became apparent. In an effort to garner support from other governments, demonstrators have waved US and UK flags and put advertising in international media during the social movement (C. Davis, 2022).

3.7. US's Response in Hong Kong Protest (2019-2020)

In reaction to the 2019–2020 Hong Kong demonstrations, the US adopted a more refined strategy in its dealings with China, enacting laws intended to hold China more responsible and

offering vocal support to the protesters. The planned extradition bill that many residents of Hong Kong saw as a danger to their freedom and the independence of the judiciary set off the demonstrations, which swiftly grew into a bigger movement advocating for democratic changes and opposition against perceived Chinese government overreach. U.S. politicians, such as President Donald Trump and members of Congress, have been endorsing the demonstrators' calls for further democratic freedoms and the maintenance of Hong Kong's independence within the framework of "one country, two systems" since the beginning (Liu & Cai, 2020). Key figures, such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, criticized the Chinese government and Hong Kong authorities for their response to the protests. This support emphasized America's dedication to democratic principles and human rights, aligning with its global stance on promoting democracy.

In November 2019, the US Congress passed the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act with strong bipartisan support. The law mandated an annual review of Hong Kong's autonomy to determine its eligibility for special economic treatment under US law. It also imposed sanctions on individuals responsible for human rights violations in Hong Kong (N. Veremeev, 2022). This legislation demonstrated a decisive response to the crisis and sent a clear message to Beijing that the United States would not remain passive as Hong Kong's freedoms were eroded. The US also took economic measures to address the situation. Alongside the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act, it passed the Protect Hong Kong Act. This law prohibited exporting crowd control equipment, such as tear gas and rubber bullets, to Hong Kong to prevent their use against protesters (F. Gentle, 2022).

These steps were intended to send a message to Beijing and the Hong Kong administration that the United States would use its economic might to back the democratic struggle. From a diplomatic standpoint, the United States endeavored to mobilize global backing for the demonstrators and denounce China's conduct in many international fora. US diplomats worked with partners and allies to form a coalition that promoted the defense of human rights and Hong Kong's autonomy. The goal of this multilateral strategy was to show that the world was keeping a careful eye on the situation in Hong Kong and to isolate China on the international front (Holbig, 2020). There were further strategic ramifications for the United States' relationship with China from its reaction to the demonstrations in Hong Kong. Washington's developing picture of China as an increasingly authoritarian and revisionist force was influenced by the Hong Kong situation. A more combative U.S. strategy toward China, marked by trade tensions, technology decoupling, and heightened backing for Taiwan, was sparked by this notion. The Hong Kong demonstrations

served as a spark for a more thorough assessment of U.S.-China ties, reaffirming American determination to oppose Chinese dominance and back democratic movements (M. Frazier, 2020).

3.8. Military Escalation between China and Taiwan (2021-2023)

China has employed various coercive tactics, stopping short of direct military conflict, to pressure Taiwan and convince its people that unification with the mainland is preferable. This has included increased patrols by PLA bombers, fighter jets, and surveillance aircraft around Taiwan. China has also strengthened its naval operations, with warships and aircraft carriers frequently crossing the Taiwan Strait as displays of military strength. The period of heightened tensions and strategic actions in the Taiwan Strait from 2021 to 2023 mirrors broader geopolitical shifts in the region (V. Kashin, 2022). An unparalleled surge in military operations took place during this time, characterized by regular PLA intrusions into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), extensive military drills, and assertive naval operations.

These acts demonstrated China's will to uphold its claims to Taiwan and its readiness to use military force as a means of coercion. The sharp increase in the quantity and regularity of PLA air missions close to Taiwan was one of the most noticeable features of this escalation. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense reports that record numbers of Chinese military aircraft have entered Taiwan's Area of Defense (ADIZ), with as many as twenty missions occurring on certain days. Beijing gained many advantages from these incursions: they tested Taiwan's defense mechanisms, showcased China's military prowess, and conveyed to Taipei and Washington the gravity of China's intentions toward Taiwan (R. Cote Jr., 2022). Important naval operations were conducted in tandem with these aviation assaults. Numerous drills were carried out by the PLA Navy (PLAN) in the waters surrounding Taiwan, notably the Taiwan Strait.

These drills showcased the PLAN's expanding blue-water capabilities, frequently involving aircraft carriers, submarines, and cutting-edge destroyers. Taiwan is facing increased strategic pressure due to China's ability to project power far beyond its borders, especially with the deployment of aircraft carriers. Conventional forces were not the only ones involved in combat operations. China has reportedly deployed upgraded missile systems that could attack Taiwan and maybe American soldiers in the area, further enhancing its missile capabilities (L. Diamond & O. Ellis, 2023). A key aspect of American force projection in the Asia-Pacific region is the development and testing of anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBMs). These missiles are designed to threaten American aircraft carriers. These advancements highlight the growing sophistication and breadth of China's military capabilities.

Taiwan, on the other hand, combined military readiness with diplomatic outreach in response to the growing dangers. Under the leadership of President Tsai Ing-wen, the Taiwanese government boosted defense budget, purchased cutting-edge weapons from the US, and held its own military drills to show that it was prepared to repel an impending invasion. Taiwan's military modernization efforts were concentrated on asymmetric warfare capabilities, with the goal of using cutting-edge technology and creative tactics to dissuade a more powerful opponent (K. S. Wu, A. Wang, Yeh, & Chen, 2022). Taiwan aimed to increase its foreign support in addition to fortifying its defense. Increased diplomatic efforts were made to win support from important allies, especially the US. The United States restated its obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act, which requires it to give Taiwan defensive weapons and to keep up its capacity to fend off any aggressive measures that endanger Taiwan's security.

American officials made high-profile visits and statements to emphasize Washington's support for Taiwan as Chinese pressure increased. This escalation had a major effect on U.S.-China relations, prompting the US to boost its military presence in the Indo-Pacific. Taiwan's security was seen as integral to its larger strategic goals. The U.S. conducted joint military drills with allies such as Australia and Japan and carried out freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea (V. Kashin, 2022). The United States aimed to reinforce its commitment to preserving the status quo and countering Chinese aggression, thereby intensifying the strategic rivalry between the two global powers. The involvement of additional actors further shifted the regional security dynamics. Japan expressed growing concern due to its proximity to Taiwan and its vested interest in regional stability

Japanese officials suggested they might get involved in a Taiwan crisis. They stressed the need for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. This marked a shift in Japan's security policy. It showed a closer alignment with U.S. strategic goals and recognized the link between regional security and their interests (Zhao S. , 2022). There were psychological and economic ramifications to China's military buildup. Taiwan's economic climate was impacted by the ongoing danger of war, which can have an impact on company confidence and investment. The ongoing military pressure aimed to weaken the resolve of the Taiwanese people and create the perception that unification with the mainland was unavoidable. However, most Taiwanese citizens continued to support the island's de facto independence (Lee S. , 2022).

3.9. Intervention of US

The geopolitical, economic, and ideological aspects of the US' involvement in the military build-up between China and Taiwan between 2021 and 2023 are diverse, as the U.S. seeks to

maintain regional balance, protect its economic interests, particularly in technology and trade, and support Taiwan's democratic values in opposition to China's growing military assertiveness. The US is invested in maintaining stability and preventing any unilateral actions that use force to alter the status quo, as it plays a significant role in the Indo-Pacific. Military tensions in the Taiwan Strait directly influence the US's strategic interests and broader geopolitical objectives in the region. Ensuring peace and security in the Taiwan Strait, a key maritime chokepoint and critical route for global trade, is a major concern for the US. A conflict in this area could disrupt international shipping lanes, negatively affecting global trade and economic stability (S. Cunningham, 2023). The US Navy's freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the Taiwan Strait and adjacent areas demonstrate Washington's determination to maintain unimpeded access to these vital maritime lanes.

Taiwan holds significant strategic value for the US as part of the first island chain, which serves as a geographical barrier to China's expanding influence in the Pacific. By strengthening Taiwan's defenses, the US can enhance its power projection and maintain its presence in the region. Additionally, it reassures US allies and partners, such as South Korea and Japan, about America's dedication to their security amidst growing Chinese aggression (Zhao S. , 2022). Taiwan is essential to the global technology supply chain, especially in semiconductor production. The US economy and the global tech industry depend on Taiwan's dominance in semiconductor manufacturing, led by companies like Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC). Therefore, protecting Taiwan's security and stability is vital to ensure the continuity of these supply chains, which are crucial for sectors ranging from consumer electronics to defense systems (Korolev, 2024).

The ideological aspect of US involvement in Taiwan cannot be overlooked. The US' support for Taiwan is driven by a combination of ideological commitments and strategic interests. Official US statements often emphasize the promotion of democracy and human rights, portraying Taiwan as a vibrant democracy in contrast to China's authoritarian regime. However, beyond these ideological considerations, Taiwan holds significant strategic value for the U.S. Geographically, Taiwan is situated along critical sea lanes in the Indo-Pacific region, making it pivotal for maintaining regional stability and countering China's military ambitions, especially in the South China Sea. Economically, Taiwan is a major player in the global semiconductor industry, supplying essential components for various technologies. The US Indo-Pacific strategy reflects these concerns, aiming to strengthen alliances and deter Chinese aggression through military cooperation and economic partnerships. Thus, while the US publicly advocates for

democratic values in its support for Taiwan, underlying strategic objectives play a crucial role in shaping its policies (U.S Department of State , 2025).

Unlike China's authoritarian government, Taiwan represents a democratic and free society. America's broader commitment to promoting democracy and human rights aligns with its support for Taiwan. Defending Taiwan is viewed by the US as part of a larger effort to combat authoritarianism, symbolizing the persistence of democracy in a region where China's influence is growing stronger (S. Cunningham, 2022). Lastly, the US seeks to maintain its credibility and honor its commitments to partners and allies. The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) mandates that the US provide Taiwan with the means for self-defense and prevent any efforts to change Taiwan's status. A lack of strong support for Taiwan could erode trust among other US partners in the region, thereby weakening the credibility of the US-led Indo-Pacific security framework (M. Chu, 2023).

Thus, this chapter has discussed the emergence of the China-Taiwan crisis and analyzed the evolving role of the US in shaping the trajectory of this conflict. These perceptions provide a necessary foundation for understanding the nature of the crisis under Xi Jinping's leadership. The next chapter (Chapter 4) builds upon this analysis by examining the security implications of the China-Taiwan crisis for the broader East Asian region in the Xi Jinping era.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHINA-TAIWAN CRISIS IN XI JINPING ERA: IMPLICATIONS FOR EAST ASIAN REGION

4. Introduction

The China-Taiwan relationship was characterized by fierce antagonism and competition from 1945 until the 1980s. Since their split in 1949, a number of intricate historical, political, and economic issues have impacted the relationship between China and Taiwan. Taiwan's history began as a Dutch colony and continued under Qing, Japanese, and then Republic of China authority until becoming a de facto state. There have been times of stress and relative quiet in the relationship; 1979 was a pivotal year for the establishment of negative peace in the Taiwan Strait (J. Teng, 2019). As pro-independence groups emerged, Taiwan's democracy in the late 1980s hindered political resolution while also increasing socio-economic contacts. The ongoing conflict has ramifications for both regional security and global geopolitics, and it continues to be a potential flashpoint in East Asia. Significant commercial and cultural linkages still exist between the two sides despite political unrest. President Lee Teng-hui said in 1991 that the Communist insurrection that had persisted since the Chinese Civil War had come to an end. Lee referred to Taiwan as a state and pushed for further involvement in the UN (R. Huang & T. H. Tan, 2019). In reaction to Lee's advocacy for independence during the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the People's Republic of China (PRC) took a strong and confrontational position. Lee's administration revived cross-strait communication, facilitated by the PRC's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF). Between 2000 and 2008, under President Chen Shui-bian's leadership, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) worked to enhance Taiwan-PRC relations through expanded trade, travel, and exchanges. Relations further advanced during Ma Ying-jeou's presidency, with a focus on strengthening economic ties with the mainland (Chen L.-c. , 2016).

Despite having differing views of the "one China," it was stated in 1992 that during a summit in Hong Kong, China and Taiwan came to an agreement of it. They so unofficially decided to disagree in 1992. By doing this, Taiwan would be prevented from pursuing independence, which would lead China to renounce its military threats and destroy the (perhaps) peaceful status quo. Moreover, this does not end the frozen issue because this arrangement was informal and hotly opposed by several well-known Taiwanese leaders. Ma Ying-Jeou was the only president of Taiwan to recognize the legitimacy of the contentious "one China, different

interpretations” policy, which is the only real agreement between the two nations (C. Bush, 2005). From 2008 until 2016, Ma Ying-jeou served as president of Taiwan. He centered his campaign on strengthening Taiwan's economic ties with China's mainland. But from a constructivist standpoint, Taiwan's social structures which inform international politics are very distinct from its policies. The growing desire for independence from China some even choosing it over economic prosperity was clearly reflected in Ma's administration (Chen Y.-J. , 2022).

Therefore, historically, under Mao Zedong, the nascent People's Republic of China asserted an uncompromising revolutionary claim over Taiwan, erecting the island as a symbol of incomplete liberation and engaging in two kinetic “shelling of Kinmen” crises in 1954 and 1958 to probe U.S. support and coerce Chiang Kai-shek's forces (Gordon, 2023; Zhang T. , 2021). Deng Xiaoping repurposed this stance in 1979 through the “Message to Compatriots in Taiwan,” signaling a strategic shift from armed liberation toward “peaceful reunification” under a One Country, Two Systems framework while retaining the use of force as an implicit backstop (Blackwill R. D., 2021). On the contrary, Xi Jinping marries Mao's ideological imperative with Deng's strategic pragmatism, deploying calibrated gray-zone coercion, unprecedented air and naval incursions and weaponizing the Anti-Secession Law to impose an explicit legal threat of force against any move toward Taiwanese independence (Gordon S. M., 2023).

Jiang Zemin's tenure saw an emphasis on economic integration and cultural appeals, notably through his “Eight Point Proposal” in 1995 that couched unification in terms of shared heritage and benign coexistence RAND Corporation, while Hu Jintao deepened this through the 2010 Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, prioritizing interdependence over immediate political settlement and codifying a patient approach to cross-Straits relations (Wang Y. , 2010). Under Xi, these policies are sidelined: his doctrinal rhetoric elevates reunification to the core of the “China Dream,” and his administration's aggressive “wolf warrior” diplomacy undermines Taipei's international space even as PLA modernizations and joint amphibious exercises signal a readiness for outright coercion. Compared to his predecessors' calibrated restraint, Xi's fusion of ideological zeal, coercive law, and military intimidation marks a new escalatory paradigm that reshapes the very nature of the China–Taiwan crisis and reverberates across East Asian security architecture (The Guardian, 2024).

The Taiwan-China issue is a complex subject, shaped by a long history and strong political and cultural factors. The ongoing dispute, marked by deep historical tensions and differing perspectives on sovereignty, has had a significant impact on the East Asian region. The Taiwan Strait, separating China and Taiwan, is considered one of the most volatile regions in the Asia-

Pacific. The potential for military conflict in this area poses significant concerns for the security and stability of neighboring countries like South Korea and Japan. Both nations depend on peace in East Asia for their economic well-being and safety (Bukhari, Khan, & Haq, 2024). As tensions between China and Taiwan increase, nations are competing to stockpile military hardware in the region as they work to fortify their defenses against the growing threat of armed confrontation. To improve their preparedness and ward off any hostile steps from China, Japan, South Korea, and the US have stepped up their military presence in the area and held joint military drills with Taiwan. There is a chance that the geopolitical tensions between China and Taiwan would turn into an armed war, which would have serious consequences for both sides and jeopardize the stability and security of nearby countries.

4.1. Rise of Xi Jinping and his vision for China's National Sovereignty

The current Chinese government under Xi Jinping faces more challenges in its foreign policy than previous administrations. The report specifically argues that China still has little power to influence the security climate in the Asia-Pacific region in its favor, despite its rising economic and geopolitical dominance. In fact, Beijing may find itself in an even more precarious strategic position in the area in the upcoming ten years as opposed to the previous ten. Several factors contribute to the region's growing instability. These include the United States' "rebalance to Asia," escalating territorial disputes between China and its neighbors in the East and South China Seas, and rising concerns about China's strategic goals. China's foreign policy is inconsistent, adding to the complexity. Beijing relies heavily on economic power to manage relations. This limits its ability to shape the regional security order. As a result, the Xi administration faces significant challenges in achieving China's "peaceful rise" in the next decade.

The "peaceful development" strategy reflects the Chinese leadership's long-held belief that a peaceful external environment is crucial for China's internal reforms, development, and its return to great power status. Since the early 1990s, China's foreign policy has aimed at alleviating external fears about its rise to ensure a stable environment for economic growth. As a result, the principle of "hiding one's capabilities and biding one's time" (*taoguang yanghui*) became central to Chinese diplomacy, particularly under Hu Jintao's presidency. Many believed that through "peaceful development," China improved relations with the world, especially in the Asia-Pacific, by expanding trade, strengthening ties with regional institutions, and using diplomatic charm.

4.2. Key Attributes of China's Peaceful Rise

While Beijing has continued to emphasize its unwavering commitment to a peaceful rise and development since Xi Jinping took office, there have been a number of significant shifts in

the fundamental ideas and methods of Chinese diplomacy that are easily noticeable. Rather than representing a significant shift from the prior peaceful rise strategy, these new adjustments when combined may serve as the cornerstone of Xi Jinping's new foreign policy doctrine, which may be referred to as "peaceful rise 2.0." In general, "peaceful rise 2.0" consists of three essential components.

A key factor in this shift is China's strengthened commitment to protecting its national interests. This was most clearly articulated by Xi Jinping during a Politburo study session in January 2013, where he addressed the country's peaceful development strategy. In his speech, Xi reaffirmed China's dedication to peaceful development while emphasizing the importance of safeguarding national interests. He stated, "We will continue on the path of peaceful development, but we must not abandon our legitimate rights and interests, nor sacrifice core national interests." He also stated that "no nation should expect China to compromise on our fundamental objectives" and "no nation should expect China to accept harmful outcomes that threaten our sovereignty, security, and development." Since then, safeguarding China's national interests has remained a consistent theme in Xi's foreign policy speeches.

All nations, including China, have as their default foreign policy goal the protection of national interests; nevertheless, before Xi's speech, Chinese leadership had not before made a clear connection between the matter and the country's peaceful development strategy. These statements emphasize that China's foreign policy prioritizes the protection of its core national interests, which Xi Jinping has highlighted as being as critical, if not more so, than the goal of "peaceful development." Xi's remarks suggest that China will not compromise its essential national interests, even for the sake of peace. In early 2014, Xi reaffirmed this position in a speech to the People's Liberation Army delegation at the National People's Congress, declaring, "We deeply cherish peace, but under no circumstances will we abandon defending our legitimate national interests and rights, nor will we sacrifice our core national interests. The speech also underscored the need for China to enhance its military modernization and strengthen its ability to fight and win wars.

A major reason for this intense focus on core national interests is China's longstanding concern that its commitment to peaceful development might restrict, or even prevent, its ability to protect its legitimate national interests. This worry has been compounded by a growing belief that some neighboring countries have become emboldened by China's peaceful development strategy, leading them to act provocatively in ways that undermine China's national interests, particularly in the South and East China Seas. Some scholars argue that China's previous, more

inward-focused strategy failed to create a stable and favorable external environment. Unsurprisingly, some Chinese academics attempted to redefine the concept of “peaceful rise” in the wake of Xi's comments. Thus, it is maintained that there need not be no conflicts at all in order for China to pursue its peaceful rising strategy. Such an interpretation holds that the general peaceful character of China's ascent will not be affected, even if there are some small-scale disputes over specific topics between China and other nations. Given how much Xi Jinping values protecting China's national interests, it is reasonable to anticipate that China would take a more assertive stand when resolving international conflicts.

4.3. Taiwan's Strategic Importance In Regional And Global Geopolitics

Taiwan holds strategic and military importance for China. This premise is widely accepted in China and serves to justify Beijing's determined policy of capturing the island, whether by force or cunning ways. It also feeds a bigger narrative. Taiwan is strategically located along important maritime communication routes that support international marine trade. The East and South China Seas, which provide access to the Pacific and Indian Oceans, are connected by the Taiwan Strait. Major shipping lanes connect the economy of Northeast Asia with markets in Europe and all places in between. The strait has been variably referred to by Chinese observers as a “crossroad,” “hub,” or “key point” of seaborne commerce that is crucial to China's economy and prosperity. Besides, Taiwan lies between the Pearl River Delta and the Yangzi River Delta Economic Zones, home to the world's largest and busiest port systems, as well as China's most productive industrial centers (Lim, 2007). In military terms, the Taiwan Strait acts as a "strategic thoroughfare," allowing Chinese air and naval forces to move between the South China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the East China Sea, which are the three primary bodies of water surrounding China's near seas.

On July 1, 2021, in a major speech commemorating the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Xi Jinping announced that the CCP had:

“transformed the future of the Chinese people and nation.” He also declared that “China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability.” Xi further emphasized that China would “no longer accept sanctimonious preaching from those who feel they have the right to lecture us.” He warned that any foreign force that dared “bully, oppress, or subjugate” China “will find themselves on a collision course with a great wall of steel forged by over 1.4 billion Chinese people” (Sacks, 2021)

Chinese strategists regard Taiwan as a "protective screen" that would shield China from external threats and safeguard the coastal provinces. In response, they have developed geospatial frameworks that position Taiwan within an arc-shaped buffer zone. This "maritime defense line,"

consisting of Zhoushan Island, Taiwan, Hainan Island, and the To Zhu Tinchang region, strengthens China's strategic presence at sea. The reunification of Taiwan with the mainland would grant Beijing access to previously unreachable strategic perspectives (Sacks, 2023). Currently, China is constrained by the first island chain, which restricts its access. The nations along this chain are either directly or indirectly connected to the US, the only superpower capable of challenging China's maritime ambitions. Beijing has long worried that, in a Taiwan conflict, a maritime coalition led by the US would block China's access to the seas. Thus, controlling the island would break China's maritime limitations and transform Taiwan, the core of the first island chain, from an obstacle into a gateway to the Pacific (W. Chen, 2010).

The Chinese rhetoric presented above demonstrates a profound understanding of Taiwan's ongoing geostrategic significance from an offensive, defensive, and economic standpoint. Taiwan is a natural barrier for China, protecting the mainland's coast. It is also a key point for securing maritime routes. Taiwan is vital for China's navy to break the island chain blockade and reach the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Reunification would close a major gap in China's defense line. It would give China control over crucial sea routes. The military would also gain a strategic base to project power in peace and war (LC Weng & Jeter, 2014). These potential benefits for China are not just theoretical; they would create real military challenges for the region, especially for the US-Japan alliance. Chinese control over Taiwan would disrupt U.S. Navy operations in the Philippine Sea. In the long run, it would boost China's ability to block foreign shipping and strengthen its submarine nuclear deterrent.

The US must carefully consider Taiwan's geopolitical significance. However, there is often a lack of understanding regarding Taiwan's inherent value and its potential to influence global affairs, particularly in the context of the ongoing strategic rivalry between the U.S. and China. Policy discourse must recognize Taiwan's multidimensional position in the world and move beyond a one-dimensional perspective (Yoshihara, 2023). Taiwan's position is shaped not just by its geopolitical significance but also by its distinct culture, advanced technical capabilities, and democratic ideals. These qualities are more than just incidental details in the story of the struggle of superpowers. They are essential to comprehending the island's role in a world that is changing quickly as well as the several directions it may go. Taiwan's strategic economic impact is exemplified by its dominance over a large percentage of the global semiconductor sector.

Moreover, the island's near-monopolistic control over specific segments of the semiconductor supply chain is an important cornerstone of the world economy, not just a product of market forces. Any major disruption to Taiwan's semiconductor supply chain might have far-

reaching effects and perhaps trigger cascading failures in a number of global businesses (Bosco, 2018). Chinese strategists are also concerned by Japan's historical ambition to rule Taiwan as a transit hub and barrier. In 2015, Zhu Zhongbo, an academic at the think tank of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Japan wants to take use of Taiwan's strategic location to get access to the region's transportation and energy lines and support its revived naval policy. Japan is accused by Zhu of having covert strategies to obstruct and delay Taiwan's amicable reunification with the Mainland. He cites the 2013 Japan-Taiwan Fisheries Agreement and the growing military area of concern between the United States and Japan as proof of malicious intent (Gitter, 2016).

Similar cautions are issued by Zhang Wenmu, who claims that Japan wants to maintain access to the Taiwan Strait in order to further its own South China Sea policy. He even goes so far as to refer to Taiwan as one of Japan's key interests. Regional ties have already been altered by tensions around Taiwan. Taiwanese companies have started to relocate their operations offshore and nearshore from China, mostly to East and Southeast Asia, as well as to Taiwan. For instance, in 2022, TSMC committed \$2.12 billion to create a subsidiary in Japan, while Taiwan's MediaTek Inc. contributed \$1 billion to capitalize Singapore, despite a decline in investments in China. States in Southeast Asia are reevaluating their ties to the PRC in response. Some, like Vietnam, are providing alternative locations for manufacturing as they become more integrated into varied supply chains. Closer ties to the region could help Taiwan gain acceptance into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. This free trade agreement includes most Pacific countries, except China and the US (TSANG, 2020).

4.4. Xi Jinping: Cross-Strait Relations

Cross-Strait relations have remained fairly stable since Xi Jinping became president in 2012, though little progress has been made. This stability is mainly due to Taipei's reluctance to pursue formal or informal measures that would build military trust between the PRC and ROC, despite pressure from Beijing. In October 2013, at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Bali, Xi Jinping told Vincent Siew that "building political foundations together and increasing mutual political trust across the Taiwan Strait are essential for peaceful relations." He also stressed the need for a framework to foster mutual military confidence and trust across the strait (Huang, 2017). However, Ma Ying-jeou's administration has not responded too many of Xi's requests. The two parties have not been able to come to any political agreements for a number of reasons. The KMT's internal conflict and Ma Yingjeou's rapidly declining popularity in Taiwan have severely limited Taipei's capacity to govern cross-Strait ties. Beijing can no

longer realistically seek for further improvements in cross-Strait ties given the changes in China's leadership and the US goal of turning its focus toward Asia.

Beijing has patience and trust, as Xi Jinping informed the honorary chair of the KMT, Lien Chan (Wright, 2024). Taiwan is not a main priority for Beijing right now. The focus is on broader goals, like improving relations with the US and advancing the "One Belt, One Road" initiative. This plan aims to create trade routes linking China to Europe through Asia. Xi Jinping seems more focused on maintaining stability than pushing for progress in cross-Strait relations. In March 2015, during a speech at the CPPCC, he said reunification is a long-term goal. He emphasized it could only happen after significant development across the Taiwan Strait. He also stressed the need to uphold the 1992 Consensus for peace and stability between both sides (Grossman & Zheng, 2024).

a) One-China Framework and Xi Jinping's Strategic Vision towards Taiwan

Xi Jinping's experience with cross-Strait relations comes from his time as party secretary in Shanghai, Zhejiang, and Fujian. These provinces have strong ties with Taiwan and serve as intermediaries for Beijing. Xi's role in cross-Strait issues grew after he became the party's nominee at the Seventeenth Party Congress in October 2007. As vice president, he met with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter twice, in December 2007 and January 2009. Xi highlighted Hu Jintao's six recommendations for peacefully advancing cross-Strait relations. He also expressed China's willingness to work with the U.S. to oppose Taiwan's de facto independence, arguing that this cooperation would benefit regional development and peace.

Xi Jinping has set clear goals for Taiwan. He aims to maximize shared interests, encourage positive interactions, and build trust. He stresses that the main goal is to uphold Beijing's "one-China" policy. In October 2013, during a meeting with Vincent Siew in Bali, Xi said, "both sides of the Strait are of one family." He emphasized the need to seize the opportunity to build a political foundation. He also called for strengthening relations and deepening trust across the Taiwan Strait. For the first time, Xi acknowledged that the long-standing issues between the two sides should be addressed incrementally, stating, "We cannot hand those problems down from generation to generation." This reflects his commitment to leading the way in advancing cross-Strait relations toward reunification and achieving substantial progress.

Worth-mentioning, When Xi visited with a group from Taiwan headed by Lien Chan in February 2014, his stance on cross-Strait ties became even clearer. He made it quite evident that the Chinese Dream required reunification. He outlined China's Taiwan policy in four points once more, although this time around there were more political overtones than in the previous four.

Reunification is what all of our countrymen on both sides want, he declared, adding that “no power can separate us.” In his address, he made a strong connection between Taiwan's future and the Chinese Dream while underscoring the significance of maintaining the one-China framework. Though he admitted that it could take some time to resolve, he voiced confidence about the eventual settlement of conflicts across the Strait. “To consolidate the basis for adhering to the 1992 Consensus and opposing 'Taiwan independence' and to foster the common understanding of One China,” Xi asked the “two sides across the Strait.”

Xi Jinping states that both sides of the Taiwan Strait have chosen peaceful development. This decision ensures peace, promotes mutual growth, and aids in the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It also benefits people on both sides. Despite the trend toward peace and communication, Xi acknowledged disruptions like the Sunflower Movement. He emphasized that actions serving the broader interests of the Chinese people and promoting peace will continue. Building on Hu Jintao's policy, Xi focused on strengthening the “one China” principle, preparing Taiwan for reunification. In September 2014, Xi told a Taiwanese delegation that "peaceful reunification; One Country, Two Systems" is the key to resolving the Taiwan issue. He added that secessionist activities and Taiwan independence are not options.

For an extended period, the term “one country, two systems” was not used by mainland China in relation to Taiwan. Given the turmoil in Hong Kong and the Sunflower Movement's discrediting of Ma Ying-jeou's leadership, Xi seems to have concluded that some values needed to be underlined again. Xi expressed this concept in comments he made in March 2015 during a panel discussion with members of the CPPCC National Committee. He declared, “We should steadfastly work toward peaceful development, steadfastly uphold the shared political foundation, steadfastly provide benefits to the people on the other side of the Strait, and steadfastly unite in order to realize national revitalization.” It is noteworthy that he urged citizens to exercise caution when facing the forces pursuing “Taiwan independence” at the same time. It is a positive sign that Xi Jinping is responding to new Taiwanese elements that are disadvantageous to China's mainland by adopting a strict and uncompromising stance on cross-Strait ties.

b) Xi Jinping's Nationalism and “China Dream”

The manner in which the nation's leader guides the nation and realizes its political direction determines the nation's growth and advancement. Like China, its lengthy past has influenced its growth and advancement; it is today regarded as one of the nations with the strongest economy worldwide. Over time, China's policy framework has developed to include economic changes as a crucial component of its sustainable political and economic objectives.

President Xi Jinping is in charge of China at the moment. He began serving in this capacity in November 2012. He is credited as being the first Chinese leader to champion the "China dream" idea. In all of his public speeches, Xi Jinping consistently highlights this idea, which is crucial to comprehending China's future policy priorities (Ferdinand, 2016). Xi's political stance has historical origins as well; in every public address he gives, he ties historical tales and principles to China's turbulent past of war, intimidation, and resistance to imperialists.

Xi Jinping views the "China dream" as a vision for revitalizing the Chinese people through revolution and reform. Leaders like Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Jiang Zemin, and Hu Jintao have all used the idea of national rejuvenation. Xi, however, has reinterpreted this ancient concept to align it with China's contemporary political goals, bringing the country closer to its future direction (Yinhong, 2015). The definition of the "China Dream" in relation to Xi Jinping's policies remains somewhat ambiguous. However, it is clear that Xi's vision extends beyond merely positioning China as a superpower; it aims to restore China's natural leadership on the global stage. The "China Dream" reflects a broader ambition for national rejuvenation, emphasizing not only economic prosperity but also cultural, political, and military strength. Continuing the pursuit of the "China Dream" is central to Xi Jinping Thought, which envisions a strong, unified, and influential China at the heart of global affairs. This vision involves reviving China's historical stature and ensuring its leadership in shaping the future of the world. China has a formidable internal power, but Xi Jinping discovered flaws in the Leninist leadership, which has left China struggling to maintain economic development while tightening party control. China may achieve its worldwide goals in this way by bolstering its armed forces and implementing economic market reforms to bolster its economy (Landler & Forsythe, 2017).

Along with Deng Xiao Ping, Xi Jinping was the first Chinese leader to be powerful enough and imaginative enough to force China to reevaluate its foreign policy approach, as seen by Xi Jinping's reintroduction of the "Fen Fa You Wei" idea. A key focus is understanding the shift in Chinese foreign policy from maintaining a low profile to actively seeking achievement. This shift is referred to as the "Chinese dream" in foreign policy. However, China must still address internal issues within Xi Jinping's administration to support its future role in the international system (Ramadani & Pabayo, 2024). It is widely believed that Xi Jinping has a clear vision for reviving China through the China Dream. By using practical thinking, Xi Jinping concentrates on fortifying the party at home and developing an all-encompassing foreign diplomacy abroad that keeps trying to avoid being susceptible to outside influences like those from the US, as shown in Taiwan's engagement.

Taiwan's capture by Xi Jinping would be a sign that the “China Dream” has succeeded. If something damages China's reputation, Xi Jinping will take stronger action against it (Carrai, 2020). Additionally, he stated that China's revitalization is a complicated issue with several dangers and difficulties that need to be overcome. It is possible to consider Xi Jinping's declaration or introduction of the Chinese Dream as a decision. Without a doubt, Xi Jinping wants to accomplish something with the introduction of the Chinese Dream, and that something is to help his nation. A leader has complete authority over decision-making and the capacity to persuade others under his direction to act in a certain way. In conclusion, it can be argued that Xi Jinping developed the concept of the Chinese Dream as a key means to help achieve the goals he set for his leadership (Brown, 2022).

The Chinese government will continue to be wholly committed to carrying out the one nation, two systems strategy, which entails tightening governance and pursuing diplomacy with big nations that exhibit Chinese characteristics. This is what Xi Jinping means when he ushers in a new age of Socialism with Chinese features, which is to continue tailoring Marxism's theory to the Chinese context while also keeping in mind the demands of the modern world. This event has a striking resemblance to China's ongoing reform efforts to implement Marxism-Leninism, which is a blend of socialist politics and communist philosophy (Rudd, 2024).

The “Chinese Dream” is a concept introduced by Xi Jinping, reflecting his vision for China's future. It is closely linked to Chinese-style socialism and emphasizes national rejuvenation, prosperity, and the improvement of living standards. The essence of the Chinese Dream is the idea of achieving personal and national success through economic growth, social stability, and the strengthening of China's global influence. But as history has shown, there have been several revolutions that have happened on a constant basis; hence, this vision must undoubtedly be brought into line with reality, either by altering laws or by putting the Chinese ideal itself into practice more successfully, on a regular basis, and according to plan. With Xi Jinping's transition to become a farmer in Shanxi province, this Chinese Dream is inextricably linked to his background (Tsang , 2015). He had never experienced how hard life might be. He tried to guide the villagers in the industrial process as a result. Because of this, he claims that the Chinese Dream is the aspiration of the populace to live better lives. The Chinese Dream is, at its core, a dream of collaboration, peace, and growth for China. The Chinese government understands that integrating socialism into their economic operations will improve China's circumstances. China's economic situation has improved with foreign investment flowing in and private enterprises enjoying more flexibility (GABOR & Marcel, 2020).

4.5. China's Military Posturing and Pressure on Taiwan

Taiwan is facing significant pressure from China. China's military frequently crosses the Taiwan Strait's middle line and enters Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ). In response to political engagements between the US and Taiwan, China conducted large-scale military drills around Taiwan from August 2022 to April 2023. China has also increased the presence of coast guard and naval personnel near Taiwan and its nearby islands. Tensions escalated further after William Lai's inauguration as Taiwan's president on May 20, 2024. Three days after Lai gave his inaugural speech, China launched "Joint Sword-2024A," a two-day period of extensive military drills around Taiwan, along with comprehensive law enforcement operations including the Chinese coast guard (Lin, Hart, P. Funairole, Lu, & Tinsley, 2024). Chinese authorities stated that the drills were meant to serve as a strong warning against external interference and provocation. They also viewed the drills as a punishment for the separatist actions of Taiwan independence forces.

There are worries that Beijing may adopt even more drastic measures to "punish" and compel Taiwan in the future in response to these Chinese intensifications against Taiwan. A quarantine of the island's gray area would be one of the main measures China may use against Taiwan. Compared to other emergencies, such an invasion, quarantine scenarios have gotten significantly less attention; nonetheless, since a quarantine is more likely to occur soon, it deserves more examination (Maizland, 2024). Since decades, China has been intimidating Taiwan with its armed forces as well. China surrounded Taiwan with its soldiers for two days on May 23. A spokesman for the Chinese military's Eastern Theater Command described the exercise. He said it was "a strong punishment for the separatist acts of Taiwan independence forces." He also called it "a serious warning against interference and provocation by external forces." The Eastern Theater Command is responsible for the exercises and any potential Taiwan contingency.

China conducted larger and longer military exercises in August 2022 and April 2023. These drills followed Pelosi's visit to Taipei and Tsai's stop in California. A Taiwanese military analyst pointed out key differences. For the first time, the drills targeted Taiwan's outlying islands. They also simulated a full-scale invasion of Taiwan. The exercises were held up to the 24-nautical-mile limit of Taiwan's contiguous zone (Staats, 2024). On May 28, Beijing conducted "joint combat readiness patrols" in the air and waters around Taiwan, intensifying its military pressure. China also took economic actions to express disapproval. On May 20, three US companies involved in arms sales to Taiwan were added to the Ministry of Commerce's list of

"unreliable entities." The following day, China imposed sanctions on former US congressman Mike Gallagher for his role in interfering with China's internal affairs, damaging its sovereignty, and threatening its interests. This was a clear indication of China's dissatisfaction with the US stance on Taiwan (Bing, 2024).

The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, signed in 2010, saw the suspension of favorable tariffs on 134 goods, as reported by China's State Council. China's military actions against Taiwan have increased in recent years. This reflects broader regional and geopolitical tensions. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has held more drills near Taiwan. These include air and naval incursions into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ). This shows Beijing's intent to assert control over the island (Tsang, 2020). These actions are part of a broader strategy aimed at deterring Taiwanese independence movements and influencing the island's political landscape, particularly in the context of Taiwan's close relations with the United States (Sutter, 2021). Furthermore, Beijing's military maneuvers serve as a reminder of its readiness to use force, if necessary, to achieve unification, adding to the growing concerns about potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait (Chan, 2022).

4.6. Gray-zone and Hybrid Warfare Strategies of China towards Taiwan

China's gray-zone and hybrid warfare strategies towards Taiwan involve using non-traditional tactics, such as economic pressure, cyberattacks, disinformation, and military posturing, to destabilize Taiwan without triggering direct military conflict. Since President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, China has used hybrid warfare to target Taiwan's government, which it sees as "separatist." The main issue is Taiwan's refusal to accept the "1992 Consensus." This consensus states both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China and should work toward reunification. Beijing insists that cross-Strait relations depend on Taiwan accepting this idea. As a result, China has launched a broad hybrid warfare campaign, viewing Taiwan as a key part of its sovereignty (J. Shattuck, 2020). China's primary goal in using hybrid warfare has been to overthrow Taiwan's ruling DPP party without resorting to direct conflict with the Taiwanese army. However, on February 24, 2022, Russia changed its protracted hybrid warfare campaign against Ukraine into a conventional military operation, raising questions about whether Taiwan might soon suffer a similar fate (Solmaz, 2024).

a) Diplomatic Pressure

One important component of China's hybrid tactics during that time was diplomatic pressure. Beijing persuaded Taipei's diplomatic friends to change their allegiance in an attempt to undermine Taiwan's international credibility. Between 2016 and 2020, several countries

severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan to establish relations with China. These countries included São Tomé and Príncipe, Panama, Burkina Faso, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, the Solomon Islands, and Kiribati (Yang W. , 2024). Taiwan has tried to cling to its official friends by emphasizing their shared ideals of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights in the face of persistent pressure from China. However, the matter is much more convoluted and has to do with geopolitics. Taiwan's administration regards its partners on the diplomatic front. Beijing is now pursuing the twelve diplomatic allies that Taiwan still has. Taiwan has had just 12 diplomatic relations since 2016, a steady decline from its previous 22 diplomatic allies. While Taipei has made significant strides in increasing its worldwide exposure and political engagement with other like-minded partners on the global arena with the help of like-minded allies, Beijing's diplomatic victories over Taiwan remain evident (Kelter, 2024).

Beijing's increasing emphasis on persuading Taiwan's non-diplomatic allies to downgrade political relations and back cross-Strait “reunification” is therefore not surprising. In fact, Beijing currently seems to be forcing foreign nations to actively back the PRC's stance on "reunification" rather than looking for political support for its “One-China Principle”. Additionally, China has not stopped applying pressure to nations with which it has diplomatic relations to send Taiwanese people accused of criminal activity back to the PRC rather than to their home country. Beijing's diplomatic effort is increasingly targeting nations that have lately deepened their political or unofficial connections to Taiwan; Lithuania and the Czech Republic are two prominent instances of this strategy. Other forms of pressure may be imposed on individuals and organizations that interact with Taiwan, consular services provided by Taiwan's overseas embassies might be curtailed, and government-to-government exchanges with Taiwanese allies and equivalents could be limited (Hsiao , 2024).

b) Propaganda and Disinformation

Propaganda and manipulation were key to China's hybrid strategies. The goals were to weaken Taiwan's leader, Tsai Ing-wen, and to create a positive image of mainland China in Taiwan. Beijing's psychological efforts relied on three elements. First, Taiwanese media that supported Beijing's narrative. Second, state-run outlets like People's Daily, China Daily, Global Times, Xinhua, and CCTV. Third, social media, where China used fake accounts and trolls to influence public opinion. Additionally, with the support of traditional media, "local collaborators" spread Chinese Communist Party (CCP) talking points, making it difficult to differentiate between official Chinese propaganda and genuine political opposition (Huang A. , 2020). The Russian misinformation strategies and narratives employed in propaganda against Ukraine are

now becoming more apparent in Chinese approaches to Taiwan. This demonstrates how Russian and Chinese misinformation and deceptive influence techniques are increasingly circulating together. One such instance occurred recently when a prominent news agency published fake news regarding US pressure on Taiwan to build a bio warfare lab there. The story aimed to stir public distrust of the US. As long as China backs Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Sino-Russian "unlimited partnership" continues, there will be more sharing of tactics, techniques, and processes in China's efforts to influence Taiwan negatively (Zhang, 2020).

c) Cyber Warfare Operations (2017-Present)

Chinese cyber agents have launched widespread attacks on Taiwanese websites as part of hybrid warfare. In 2017, they carried out over two hundred million cyberattacks on Taiwan's military sites, according to Taiwan News. The main targets were the Ministry of National Defense, the National Defense University, the National Armed Forces Recruitment Center, hospitals linked to the Ministry of National Defense's Medical Affairs Bureau, and the Political Warfare Bureau of the Ministry of National Defense (Yang S. , 2018). "Taiwan has been hit by a jump in serious cyber-attacks from China during the past two years in the latest sign that Beijing is only increasing its pressure as the US reaffirms its support for the self-ruled island," according to a Financial Times news item published on June 24, 2018 (White, 2018).

The "Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis" involved the use of offensive cyber operations (OCOs) by Chinese cyber attackers. Apart from its open threats, military drills, and penalties, China also vandalized public displays and initiated distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) assaults against Taiwan's defense networks. Every day, millions of cyberattacks target Taiwan, mostly for espionage and data theft. As Beijing becomes increasingly concerned about Taiwan's political direction, Chinese cyber-enabled misinformation tactics will only intensify in their disruptiveness. China outperforms Taiwan's cyber defenses in every significant way (Boyle, 2024). Information Communication Electronic Force Command (ICEF), Taiwan's military cyber force, is still having difficulty surviving on its own. For fear of losing access to the Chinese market, some of the Western companies backing Ukraine's cyber resilience would be less willing to back Taiwan's cyber defenses. Above all, China is unlikely to be able to use cyberattacks to do damage to influence Taiwan's political decisions. Taiwanese defense forces are investing resources in hardening crucial networks because they are well aware of the cyber threat to essential infrastructure. China could be concealing its potential to launch more catastrophic strikes (Lewis J. A., 2023).

4.7. Maritime Law Enforcement and Civil Aviation for Contesting and Limiting Territorial Jurisdiction

Beijing is limiting Taiwan's government's legal options and discouraging other nations from cooperating with it by unilaterally enforcing its own laws and regulations. This is known as lawfare. These actions, which appear to be an attempt to curtail the authority of the Taiwanese government, are a reflection of Beijing's attempts to refute both the ROC's existence and the factual truth that it and the PRC are two independent nations. Beijing's legal claims over Taiwan have not altered, and the Chinese government is not in the process of passing any new legislation. Nevertheless, the PRC is starting to implement these claims, which might have an impact on other rival claimants that have disagreements with China over territory. In an attempt to enforce its maritime and territorial claims over Taiwan, the PRC is increasingly using the China Coast Guard, a paramilitary force under the Central Military Commission (CMC) that is used for maritime law enforcement, and increasingly deploying it in patrols with the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) (Hsiao , 2024).

This strategy mirrors the PRC's sudden and arbitrary enforcement of regulations on Taiwanese companies in China, using them for political leverage. Examples include increased violations of Taiwan's 12 nautical miles of territorial waters, intensified maritime surveillance around Taiwan, and the detention of ROC citizens for alleged illegal fishing. Additionally, civilian vessels were subjected to forced inspections, and PRC vessels intruded into Taiwanese ports, often appearing non-military. The PRC seems to be shifting away from its previous stance of acknowledging the ROC and PRC as separate jurisdictions, now disputing this view (Xuanzun, 2023).

4.8. Economic Coercion

Beijing heavily relies on coercive economic tools in the economic domain. These tactics include suspending favorable tariffs, banning certain imports, and expanding restrictions to non-agricultural and non-aquatic goods. They also involve enforcing arbitrary regulations on companies for political reasons and sanctioning individuals and organizations. While these actions don't significantly differ from the PRC's usual approach, Beijing will likely intensify them to increase pressure on Taiwan's new government (Hale, 2024). By helping Taiwanese companies diversify their markets, Taiwan is attempting to lessen its reliance on the PRC for trade. The risks resulting from Taiwan's reliance on China for imports and exports are being actively examined by the government. In order to guarantee that their supply chains are not too

dependent on a single market, major firms are implementing the “China plus One” strategy, which promotes investment in nations other than China (Y. Wu, 2024).

Taiwanese farmers seek greater economic independence from China, addressing issues such as reduced export reliance, trade restrictions, and the need for stronger regional and bilateral trade partnerships to secure their economic future. They are also become more conscious of the risks associated with over-dependence on China. For example, mainland China made up over 25% of Taiwan's total mango exports in June 2020. This percentage has fallen to barely 5% by the same month in 2022 just two months before China's economic coercion. Mango growers are said to have learned from China's recent trade restrictions on Taiwanese fruit, which has resulted in this notable decline. By entering into bilateral and regional trade agreements, Taiwan is fortifying its economy and supply chains. Also fortifying its ties with other countries that have also been subjected to economic pressure from China. Notably, Taiwan has signed important accords including the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) with Canada, the TW-US 21st Trade Initiative with the United States, and the discussions for an Enhanced Trade Partnership (ETP) with the United Kingdom. Furthermore, Taiwan is aggressively working to become a member of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), or Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement (Tran, 2024)

4.9. President Xi Jinping-Taiwan: Implications for the East Asian Region

In recent years, countries in the Asia-Pacific, along with the US, Japan, Australia, and the EU, have become increasingly concerned about tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Even South Korea, usually cautious, has expressed worry about a potential military conflict. Southeast Asia is particularly vulnerable. It is close to both Taiwan and the PRC. Taiwan hosts many Southeast Asians. These countries are also linked through regional supply chains. Stability in trade across the Taiwan Strait is vital. A conflict between Taiwan and China could severely impact Southeast Asia's peace and stability (Bing, 2024). A crisis in the Taiwan Strait could divide ASEAN or even cause its collapse. Member states have differing views on Taiwan. These factors highlight why a conflict over Taiwan would be catastrophic for Southeast Asia.

It has been noted that the South China Sea conflicts and the maritime interests and security of Southeast Asian nations might be affected by the emergence of a conflict in Taiwan. Some argue that in the event that a spillover of this kind occurs, maritime Southeast Asian nations particularly those embroiled in continuing issues with China might side with the US in its fight against China, defending their national interests and sovereignty (Maizland, 2024). A conflict involving Taiwan could spread to the South China Sea. If China launched operations from its

bases in the Paracel or Spratly Islands, or tried to seize Pratas Island or Itu Aba (Taiping Island), which are under Taiwanese control, military action in the South China Sea could become inevitable. Moreover, the US and its allies would not limit their efforts to Taiwan and its immediate region (Xiaojun, 2022).

4.10. US: Regional Security Alliances in the Asia-Pacific

Even more dire consequences might arise from the China-Taiwan dispute than from the war between Russia and Ukraine. The US is likely to be involved in the China-Taiwan dispute due to its central role in the conflict. Southeast Asia is vital to both global and regional US interests. Decision-makers view the US-China relationship as the most important bilateral relationship of the twenty-first century. If not managed well, it could lead to conflict and economic instability. However, if managed effectively, it could bring significant benefits for global peace and prosperity (Muhamad, 2022). It has been noted that China's external ties have been significantly shaped by its history and culture. According to this perspective, China is actively working to reclaim its proper position. This drive consists of two main parts. The first is the unification movement, which is not covered in this study and involves Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang under Chinese sovereignty. Restoring China's historical influence among its neighbors is the second motivation. Southeast Asia is seen by China as having the highest potential to be productive and open to Chinese influence projection. This push may, but is not certain to, put Chinese and American interests in Southeast Asia in conflict or rivalry. Some scholars have characterized China's connections with Southeast Asia as belonging either to a classical "Confucian tribute system" or, more recently, to a more Western idea of a sphere of influence (M. Morrison & Vaughn, 2006).

The way China and Taiwan's geopolitical interests interact has a big impact on regional security. The fragile diplomatic relations between the two countries pose the risk of escalating into a disastrous situation that could undermine the security of neighboring states. The core of the issue lies in the differing political systems and conflicting sovereignty claims over Taiwan. The situation becomes even more complex when international actors, such as the United States, are involved. Regional players like the US and Japan may become engaged in the military competition arising from these geopolitical tensions. The likelihood of escalation and poor judgment may increase as a result of the instability, which might also increase military deployment. There are significant diplomatic and economic repercussions to the crisis. Other nations are reluctant to acknowledge Taiwan's sovereignty as a result of China's use of force there. The current hostilities between China and Taiwan have the potential to erode regional cooperation

and stability, particularly in regional institutions where China's concerns restrict Taiwan's involvement (Haider, Khan, Ul Haq, & Ullah, 2024).



Figure No. 2 Map of US Regional Security Alliances in the Asia-Pacific (Economist, 2023)

As American military bases have grown, especially with the US presence at sites like Clark Air Base, Subic Bay Naval Base, and the recent Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites in the Philippines, defense ties between the Philippines and the US have been reinforced. Additionally, Exercise Garuda Shield, a large-scale annual international military exercise, remains a key event that Indonesia is eager to co-host. While the Indonesian military continues to value this partnership, it tends to favor closer collaboration with the U.S. military and the procurement of American-made equipment. Singapore and Washington have lately expanded their cooperation in the field of AI and autonomous systems for military. Though some view Cambodia as a “client state” of China, the country appears ready to improve defense ties with the US, particularly by expanding access to the US's highly regarded professional military education programs. When it comes to encouraging Southeast Asian partners' economic aspirations, Washington is likewise promoting an open door policy (Cyrill, 2024). According to

the same study that highlighted concerns about alignment, Southeast Asian elites have identified "unemployment and economic recession," along with "widening socio-economic gaps and rising income inequality," as the top issues facing their countries in 2024. Given these challenges, the region is in need of strong allies to address these pressing concerns.

Vietnam has embraced increased trade and investment from the US following the signing of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership last year, despite Hanoi's bid to be recognized as a market economy being rejected (Goyer, 2024). This is particularly evident in the financing of private sector projects in sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, and small businesses. Thailand, with the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia, is also keen to expand its economic collaboration with the United States, particularly in areas like investing in power production facilities and supporting the US automotive industry. Meanwhile, U.S. businesses have played a key role in helping Malaysia transition from a manufacturing-based economy to one focused on value-added industries by providing scholarships and creating around 300,000 new jobs in the country (Sambhi, 2024).

4.11. Implications for ASEAN

The values of non-interference and non-alignment have long been upheld by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which remains a key player in the Indo-Pacific region. Even though all of ASEAN's member nations support the one-China policy, ASEAN continuously calls for "maximum restraint" and exhorts both sides to abstain from "provocative actions" when there is a threat of invasion and armed war in the Taiwan Strait. Since the beginning of 2024, tensions have increased between China and Taiwan. The Chinese Communist Party has shifted from advocating peaceful reunification to emphasizing stronger reunification rhetoric. In the months before and after Taiwan's presidential elections, the Ministry of National Defense in Taiwan reported increased Chinese military activity (Kurniawan, 2024). There are two reasons for this increase in hostility. The success of Beijing's bitter enemy, Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party, in the January 2023 election is one cause. The increased activity and presence of the Japanese and American militaries on the islands close to Taiwan is another significant element.

Moreover, ASEAN is worried about the consequences of such an escalation for its member states and is afraid of being dragged into a military confrontation. ASEAN member nations import a significant amount of integrated circuits and electronic components from Taiwan (Sang, 2022). A military confrontation between Beijing and Taipei would also obstruct air and sea trading lanes to Southeast Asia, which would have a negative economic impact.

Geographically, the Taiwan Strait is connected to the South China Sea, which is a major regional concern for China, Taiwan, and four ASEAN members. The United States now has access to vital military installations in the Philippines according to the recently signed Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. These facilities may become essential in the event of a conflict in the South China Sea or Taiwan Strait. Today, ASEAN holds a key position in the Taiwan Strait dispute (Wester, 2023).

Southeast Asian countries, which fall under the purview of the world's superpowers, don't seem to be willing to commit to a side in the current US-China dispute over Taiwan. Many Southeast Asian nations fear provoking China and are concerned about China's long-term aspirations and rising military might, but they also harbor lingering misgivings about US security guarantees. Undoubtedly, the area is more concerned about economic pressures given the weakening prospects for global development and the disentanglement of supply chains that impact economies that rely heavily on exports (Liaqat, 2022). Given its offers of government incentives, loans, and other economic possibilities, it may appear that the area would choose to side with China; yet, it is important to remember that the US plays a critical role in ensuring the security of the region. It is extremely difficult for the ASEAN members to maintain their neutrality in the face of great power competition given these conflicting views and perceptions of threat, in addition to intraregional conflicts (Chap, 2023).

The emphasis placed on each of the ten ASEAN nations' remarks varies, which may be a result of their distinct domestic issues or their varied relationships with China and the US. Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia have all made clear their support for China's sovereignty over Taiwan. Regarding Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang, Cambodia views them as domestic matters falling under China's sovereign powers. Laos opposes any efforts to create a "two China" or "one China, one Taiwan" situation. Myanmar condemns any provocative actions that interfere in the internal affairs of other nations. Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia closely watch the balance between the US and China. Indonesia, concerned about the rising rivalry among major powers, calls for wisdom and responsibility from all leaders to maintain peace and stability (Jieweni & Amer, 2022). Singapore is hoping for a *modus vivendi* between the US and China. Vietnam views the US and China as leading important partners of Vietnam, despite Malaysia's foreign minister emphasizing that "we want to be friends with both China and the US." As official US allies, Thailand and the Philippines have expressed anxiety in media reports about being drawn into open confrontation with China because of their ally status. Thailand and China have

always had cordial ties, and Bongbong Marcos, the recently elected president of the Philippines, has expressed a desire for a balance between China and the US (A. Madsen, 2001).

In order to foster collaboration and peace, as well as to guarantee the security and prosperity of the area, ASEAN also supports China's goal of peaceful reunification. Many people in Southeast Asia are concerned about a potential conflict between China and Taiwan in which the US might be involved. The "Taiwan Relations Act of April 10, 1979" clarifies that the US may intervene if a conflict arises between the two regions. The Act allows the US to provide Taiwan with defense capabilities. However, the US also upholds its position on the US-China relationship, stating that, based on the Act and three cooperative Communiqués from 1972 to 1982, Taiwan is part of China and the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government of China (Sotharith, 2017). To gain the support of the Taiwanese people, China should engage with them in a more diplomatic and adaptable manner. While China must impose some limitations on Taiwan in order to control the country during its diplomatic efforts to gain independence, certain leeway should be allowed, particularly with regard to social, cultural, and economic ties. In order to foster understanding and understanding between the two parties, more conversations should be encouraged to lessen distinctions in support of unity (Dalmia, 2023).

In short, this chapter has critically analyzed the China-Taiwan crisis, with particular emphasis on developments during the Xi Jinping era, and examined its far-reaching implications for the security and stability of the East Asian region. The comprehensions drawn here set the stage for the upcoming chapter, which presents a detailed discussion and interpretation of key findings, offering deeper reflections on the dynamics explored so far.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Taiwan sees itself as an independent sovereign country (Mainland Affairs Council, 2007), and “the People’s Republic of China has never exercised sovereignty over Taiwan or other islands administered by the ROC (Taiwan)” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2025). Mainland China views it as part of its territory, following the "One China" policy. This issue, called "Cross-Strait relations," is complex and sensitive. The history between China and Taiwan has been marked by conflict and instability. In recent years, both sides have worked to improve communication and understanding. One approach to managing the complexity of these relations has been to maintain the status quo, avoiding significant changes to Taiwan's political status. This strategy reduces the likelihood of hostilities between the two sides growing and promotes stability. Promoting trade and cultural exchanges between China and Taiwan is another strategy used. This approach aims to build understanding, cooperation, and reduce tension. The relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait has often been shaped by distance. This delicate and complex dynamic, marked by both conflict and communication efforts, reflects the principles of RSCT, where the security concerns of regional actors are interconnected. The strategies employed by both sides, such as maintaining the status quo and encouraging trade, are reflective of efforts within the East Asian regional security complex to manage mutual security concerns.

Several countries have contributed to fostering positive relations and communication between China and Taiwan. The US has played a key role, supporting efforts to ease tensions and promote dialogue while advocating for a peaceful resolution. The China-Taiwan relationship matters not only to the two parties involved but also to regional stakeholders like the US and Japan. Any conflict or tension between China and Taiwan could disrupt regional security and economic stability. Therefore, these key players have a vested interest in maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

Understanding the cultural distinctions between China and Taiwan is crucial for effectively navigating the complications of cross-strait relations. Promoting cultural interchange and mutual understanding is vital because it may successfully bridge gaps and cultivate a sense of respect for one another. Taiwan needs to handle the present relations with China deftly while retaining its de facto autonomy. This entails waiting for the relationship to progressively develop and abstaining from activities that may enrage Beijing. Beijing has a difficult decision on whether to support Taiwan's independence movement or pursue a peaceful road towards reunification.

This decision represents a significant challenge in managing the complex cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan. It is crucial to acknowledge China's determination and ability to exert non-military pressure on Taiwan. The involvement of external actors like the US, Japan, and other regional stakeholders in promoting peace and stability highlights the interconnected nature of states within the East Asian regional security complex, as described by RSCT. Their role in addressing the crisis and shaping cross-strait relations emphasizes the broader security implications that go beyond the China-Taiwan dynamic, influencing the entire region.

Taiwan and China have a complex relationship that is characterized by friendly collaboration and the interaction of power dynamics. The two countries have managed to maintain a precarious balance between peaceful coexistence and the complexities of power dynamics in their relationship over time. However, the increasing military might of China, including its missile arsenal, has raised concerns about Taiwan's security and the US government's ability to defend the island from potential Chinese attacks. Taiwan's defense capabilities are facing difficulties due to the changing military balance between Taiwan and mainland China. The matter is complicated by the fact that China still has the right to use force to stop Taiwan from becoming independent. It was highlighted that Taiwan-China ties remained stable in 2009, which was an improvement over previous years' bilateral relations. In light of China's expanding economic and military might, the autonomy issue for Taiwan poses a significant obstacle in order to understand the delicate balance between the dynamics of power and peaceful cohabitation, as well as the complexity of Taiwan's relationship with China. The shifting military balance and Taiwan's security concerns within the context of China's rising power highlight the core tenets of RSCT, where the security of states is closely tied to the security dynamics of their regional environment. Taiwan's efforts to maintain autonomy in the face of China's power expansion exemplify the regional security complex, where the internal and external security concerns of Taiwan and China are intricately linked.

The present Cross-Strait tensions between China and Taiwan have drawn a lot of attention from across the world. Some nations have taken a cautious approach, realizing how delicate the situation is and how quickly things may become worse. Some people have made the decision to maintain their objectivity, refusing to affiliate with any side and emphasizing the value of diplomatic negotiations and nonviolent communication in settling the dispute. Some people have advocated for Taiwan's de facto self-governance and urged for the recognition of its independence and rights. A number of countries have stepped up their military posture in the region to demonstrate their support and deterrence to Taiwan. Given the current situation, many reactions

may be seen throughout the world to the tensions in the Taiwan Strait between China and Taiwan; nonetheless, everyone agrees that constructive dialogue and discussions are essential to securing a peaceful conclusion. Hence, the global reactions to Cross-Strait tensions, with nations adopting various diplomatic and military stances, reflect the interconnectedness of the East Asian security complex, as described in RSCT. The involvement of external actors in both diplomatic and military domains emphasizes how regional security issues can prompt broader international responses, reinforcing the interdependent security dynamics within the region.

Given the probability of enduring conflict between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland in the future, Taiwan faces the difficult task of preserving its de facto independence while China's expanding economic and military might eclipses it. There are many different and intricate foreign reactions to the tensions that exist between China and Taiwan. Some countries remain neutral, while others blatantly advocate for Taiwan's independence and aggressively work to have its rights recognized. Many countries have stepped up their military buildup in the area to assist Taiwan and act as a deterrent. Current diplomatic efforts focus on reducing tensions and seeking a peaceful resolution by promoting communication between China and Taiwan. The international community's response to the rising tensions across the Taiwan Strait highlights the recognition of both the potential threat of a major Chinese attack on Taiwan and the importance of maintaining regional peace and stability. Therefore, Taiwan's struggle to maintain de facto independence amid China's growing power and the international community's varied responses exemplifies the central concept of RSCT, where the security of a state is influenced not only by its own actions but also by the responses of neighboring states and external powers. The growing military presence and diplomatic initiatives reflect how regional security concerns spill over into global dynamics, reinforcing the need for regional cooperation and peaceful conflict resolution.

It has been observed that the rivalry between the PKC and KMT, which has always served as a backdrop for political internal conflicts, and the current Progressive Democratic Party, which maintains links to both Chinese and Taiwanese people, are classic representations of the pro-independence movement. The present worries of the world community and the region are related to the fact that Chinese armed forces, led by President Xi Jinping, are fully equipped to seize control of Taiwan and take back its land. Tension has arisen as a result of China's retaliatory response to the US military presence in the area, which is viewed as a favor to Taiwan. An increase in tension that goes much beyond the point of open violence would be detrimental to the whole area, especially Indonesia, which has business ties to Taiwan. Although China considers the Taiwan dispute an internal issue, the ASEAN region, including Indonesia, and parliamentary

diplomacy must urgently remind all parties—especially China and the United States—of the importance of maintaining security and peace both regionally and globally. It is essential to promote self-sufficiency, avoid provocation, uphold the UN Charter, and honor the friendship and cooperation agreements among ASEAN members, while supporting these objectives as much as possible. In this context, the political tensions within Taiwan, involving parties like the PKC, KMT, and the Progressive Democratic Party, along with the external reactions to China's assertive approach, highlight the interdependence of regional and global security within the RSCT framework. The involvement of external actors like the United States and ASEAN states in the Taiwan Strait issue illustrates how regional conflicts can trigger wider geopolitical consequences and emphasize the importance of multilateral efforts to maintain stability and peace.

Beijing seems committed to peaceful reunification and prefers to bring Taiwan into the fold without using military force. The growing reliance on non-military methods marks a shift in Beijing's strategy, moving from preventing Taiwan's independence to actively pushing for its unification with the PRC. Beijing's current position, which appears to dispute this objective fact, differs from its previous position of implicitly admitting the different jurisdictions of the PRC and ROC, according to an analysis of Chinese actions implemented from 2016 to the present. Even though the PRC's actions in the gray area are non-kinetic by operational standards, things could get dangerous if it continues to systematically undermine the ROC's legal space through these kinds of actions and doesn't face opposition. This is especially true given its aggressive military activities. It is important to note that such PRC lawfare methods are probably meant to elicit a response or the inability to respond from Taiwan and the United States. These strategies have the potential to stoke tensions between Taiwan's new government and the US if they are not handled well. Moving ahead, Washington and Taipei must communicate clearly, and both sides' responses must be properly calibrated. Beijing is unlikely to drastically step up its measures in the upcoming months lest it turn the Taiwan issue into a national election issue, especially with the US election scheduled for November. Most likely, what is currently visible is only a sneak peek at what is to come. Being alert is crucial. Thus, Beijing's shift towards non-military means of compelling Taiwan's reunification, while strategically avoiding kinetic escalation, is a key demonstration of RSCT's concept of security interdependence. In this case, the actions of China to undermine Taiwan's legal status without direct military aggression reflect the tension between regional security dynamics and the security responses of external actors like the United States, which can influence Taiwan's ability to respond.

The risk of conflict in the Taiwan Strait is growing as US-China competition increases. This rivalry covers trade, finance, technology, the internet, space, diplomacy, and the military. The US and China also compete over values and ideologies. Taiwan is the only place where this rivalry has a major negative impact. Taiwan is critical for both China and the US. It serves as a defense line for the US and its allies, centrally located in the region. Taiwan is also a thriving democracy. The US is committed to helping Taiwan defend itself under the Taiwan Relations Act. This ensures Taiwan can resist Chinese pressure, threats, or invasion. The US's commitment and security interests, based on peace in the Taiwan Strait, are now at risk. The US-China competition, especially in the Taiwan Strait, exemplifies how the security of Taiwan, as a regional actor, is shaped by both its own actions and the broader geopolitical rivalry between great powers. The involvement of the US, not just as a military ally but as a key ideological competitor to China, underscores the regional and global implications of the Taiwan issue, emphasizing the need for delicate balancing in the RSCT framework.

China views Taiwan as a core part of its sovereign territory. It will not tolerate any foreign influence or Taiwanese independence movements challenging the One China principle. For China, unification, ideally peaceful but by force if necessary, is vital for the Communist Party's stability. China's goal of becoming a global power, especially by expanding into the Pacific, drives its desire for unification. Unity is seen as crucial for the regime's survival and for China to become a leading global force. Xi's personal ambition to rule China indefinitely also adds uncertainty to the situation. Therefore, both China and the US cannot ignore Taiwan, even if they are reluctant to initiate conflict over it. China's stance on Taiwan as a sovereign part of its territory, backed by its military posture, reflects the security interdependence principle in RSCT, where the security concerns of both China and Taiwan are intertwined with the roles of external powers, like the US.

The growing military buildup in the region should serve as our primary indicator of the mounting tension in the Taiwan Strait. In the past four years, the PLA has greatly increased its near-shore exercises. The PLA often announces or conducts military drills in the East China Sea during visits by senior US officials to Taiwan. As mentioned earlier, there were far more PLA Air Force incursions into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in 2019 than in 2020. From January to November 2021, over 930 such missions took place. The US has shown its support for Taiwan by approving new arms sales and sending warships across the Taiwan Strait. Meanwhile, China has continued to threaten and pressure Taiwan with military drills. The US Air Force frequently patrols the South China Sea and Taiwan's ADIZ. The Pentagon has updated

its defense plan to incorporate many anti-ship missile launch sites in order to thwart China's intentions and be ready for all eventualities around Taiwan. The increasing military presence by both China and the US in the Taiwan Strait highlights the concept of regional security interdependence, where actions by one power directly influence the security environment and strategic decisions of the other, as seen in the frequent military drills and maneuvers.

Apart from dispatching additional envoys of high status to the island, the US Congress also approved many measures endorsing Taiwan. Whether this is due to China's threat, the US's overt backing, or a mix of the two is debatable, but it is the reason why so many Taiwanese support standing with the US against China. In addition to inflaming Taiwanese sentiment against China, Beijing's avowed intention to seek peaceful Chinese unification is being called into question by the growing military danger China poses to Taiwan. Xi may have hoped to achieve full unification during his tenure, as shown by his 2019 statement on "preparing the 'one country, two systems' option for Taiwan" (Taiwan Affairs Office 2019). However, Taiwanese trust in China's willingness to implement this formula was shattered by the crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and the imposition of the National Security Law, which tightened control over Hong Kong society.

Despite proposals to offer financial incentives, the business climate in mainland China has worsened. Rising labor costs and unpredictable CCP interference are major factors. While Taiwanese businesses faced harassment before, Xi's interference in private firms and the expulsion of businesspeople who opposed him intensified the pressure. This gave China the ability to shape Taiwan's perceived reality. According to a study of the poll data, male respondents with college degrees are more inclined to favor the US and its allies against China. Views on standing with the US against China are unaffected by party affiliation or predictions about how the cross-Strait relationship would develop in the future (i.e., independence or unification). The things that really matter are the incidental ones. An alliance between the US and Taiwan is more likely to gain support from those who believe the US would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack. This is more common than among those who view the level of peace between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait as either very high or very low. The increasing US support for Taiwan, coupled with China's escalating military threat, exemplifies the security interdependence principle in RSCT, where the actions of one state (the US) in response to the other's (China's) security policies directly affect Taiwan's security environment and shape public sentiment.

People's decisions on this matter are also influenced by preexisting inclinations for more moderate policies toward China or for deeper economic relations with that country, since those respondents are less inclined to advocate standing up to China as an ally of the US. Lastly, it has been shown that people's decisions to side with the US against China are significantly influenced by their level of confidence or mistrust in China's promises. Those who consider China's promises unreliable are more likely to support aligning with the US against China, especially given recent events in Hong Kong and China's use of economic pressure. China cannot impose economic restrictions on Taiwanese agricultural imports while also providing financial incentives to Taiwanese companies doing business there.

Taiwanese mistrust of China grows due to inconsistent actions, increasing support for an alliance with the US. Party identity is not a significant factor, and the desire for independence is a deeply held belief that changes slowly. Criticizing independence supporters or the DPP has little impact. Military pressure from China would likely backfire, prompting the US to strengthen its presence in the Taiwan Strait. Our research shows Taiwanese support for an alliance with the US rises as US military activity in the Strait grows, especially when they feel confident the US will defend Taiwan in case of a Chinese invasion. Support also increases with the perceived threat from the Taiwan Strait. The decision to align with the US is clear unless Chinese pressure makes resistance seem futile. Taiwan's growing support for an alliance with the US, driven by economic pressures and inconsistent Chinese actions, reflects the RSCT principle of interdependence. China's actions and promises shape Taiwan's behavior, particularly in security and trust.

China's only option is to reduce military tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Lower tensions would make Taiwan less likely to support an alliance with the US against China. A high level of threat would likely lead to US action. US leaders must show they are ready to defend Taiwan if China attacks. Our findings show that those who believe the US will support Taiwan are more likely to favor an anti-China alliance. While the US avoids conflict with China, Taiwan and its allies closely watch US support for Taiwan's self-defense. Ensuring that Taiwan's allies trust in its self-defense is the best way for the US to prevent conflict with China. Taiwanese support for an alliance with the US is now a key test for the Indo-Pacific alliance. This reflects the RSCT principle of security interdependence, where Taiwan's alignment with the US depends on its security needs and its belief in US support during Chinese aggression.

The policy of strategic ambiguity has kept peace between China and Taiwan and served US interests for over 50 years. However, its main flaw is the lack of real guarantees that the US will defend Taiwan if China attacks. According to 2020 TNSS data, many Taiwanese still doubt

US support in such a scenario. Those who believe the US will defend Taiwan are more likely to favor an alliance with the US. Instead of maintaining strategic ambiguity, the US should communicate more frequently with Taiwan to build trust within the broader US-China competition. Recent actions, such as arms sales to Taiwan, increased US warship presence in the Taiwan Strait, President Biden's statements on Taiwan's defense, and high-profile visits like Nancy Pelosi's in August 2022, offer more reassurance to the Taiwanese. In response, the Taiwanese people increasingly support an alliance with the US. The US's changing stance on Taiwan, especially through arms sales and public assurances, reflects the RSCT concept of security reassurance. This signaling of US defense commitment helps prevent escalation and strengthens the US-led Indo-Pacific alliance.

Taiwanese officials face a crucial decision regarding national security: whether to align with the US against China. China has repeatedly threatened to annex Taiwan if it delays approval of Beijing's "one country, two systems" and "peaceful unification" proposals, making the choice seem clear. Taiwanese mistrust has increased due to China's recent implementation of the National Security Law in Hong Kong, which undermines its "one country, two systems" promise. As a result, for Taiwanese officials, aligning with the US against China appears to be the only viable option. It has been observed that Taiwanese citizens are not inclined to support a counterbalance approach to China. The current DPP is also unable to depend on its followers' desire to form an alliance with the US, as party affiliation has no bearing on this decision. The DPP's only option is to take a "moderate" stand and preserve the status quo, refusing to provoke an offensive from China or give in to its political demands.

A stance on policy like this would also serve US interests, as Taiwanese people are more inclined to accept US-China allying when they see a reasonable degree of tension in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwanese people will be more inclined to side with the US against China if the US continues to provide reassuring signals to the island nation. However, it has been observed that this choice is more dependent on contextual variables than on structural ones, so it should not be taken for granted. The key factors that policymakers in the US, China, and Taiwan must consider in their strategic decisions include the expectation of US assistance, mistrust of China's commitments, and the level of peace in cross-Strait relations. Taiwan's choice to align with the US or risk siding with China is influenced by the RSCT principle of security dependence. Taiwan's security needs and strategic choices depend on its assessment of US support in the face of Chinese aggression and the changing dynamics of cross-Strait relations.

China's perception of the Biden administration's actions and policy signals on Taiwan has been greatly influenced by the Trump administration's Taiwan Strait policy, especially by the revisions made to the policy near the conclusion of the administration. Some in the US believe that the measures put in place at the conclusion of the Trump administration won't really make a difference, such as the abrupt declaration made by the State Department on January 9, 2021, that interactions between US officials and their counterparts in Taiwan would no longer be restricted. However, from the Chinese point of view, these are significant shifts that show how the one China policy that the US has followed since the Nixon administration is being progressively undermined. The political basis of US-China ties is severely damaged by these developments, which further exacerbate the already severe lack of strategic mutual confidence. As a result, China must prepare for the worst regarding the Taiwan dispute. China's assessment of the Biden administration's actions and policy signals indicates that its approach to the Taiwan Strait has largely mirrored that of the previous administration. Upon taking office, the Biden administration continued to enhance official US-Taiwan relations, presenting them as "unofficial" ties, while also strengthening military and security cooperation between the US and Taiwan. Despite the absence of drastic initiatives, the Biden administration is pursuing the "parallel development" of US-Taiwan and US-China relations. This suggests that the trend of gradually weakening the One China policy is likely to continue.

Second, China now views the Biden administration's Taiwan Strait policy more negatively as a result of its attempts to bring friends and partners together to confront the China problem.

A key element of the Biden administration's China policy is collaborating with allies and partners to address the challenge posed by China. Shortly after taking office, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin visited Japan, where they held two-plus-two discussions. Their joint statement following the talks included Taiwan and came before high-level meetings with China. These actions, as seen from China's viewpoint, highlight at least two important problems. First, the Biden administration desires more involvement from Japan in the Taiwan dispute. The Chinese side is very sensitive to the idea of a more significant Japanese participation in the Taiwan Strait policy of the United States, given the history of ties between China and Japan and the Japanese colonial control of Taiwan. Beijing therefore interprets the Biden administration's decision to have Japan take a more active role in Taiwan-related matters as reflecting either a lack of desire to restore stability to China-US relations or the absence of "real China hands" on the Biden team, which leads to a lack of understanding about the sensitivity and significance of the Taiwan question in China-US relations. Second, the Biden administration

emphasizes that the US has to back Taiwan because it is a “leading democracy” (referring to Taiwan's political system, which includes free elections, a multi-party system, and respect for civil liberties, in contrast to China's authoritarian regime). The administration also places a strong emphasis on enhancing ties with regional allies, such as Vietnam, which it does not consider to be a “democratic country.” China believes that Taiwan is being used by the US to “contain China's geostrategic influence,” and that US allusions to Taiwan's “democratic values” are only rhetorical. This discrepancy reinforces this belief. Therefore, the evolving nature of US-Taiwan relations, as perceived by China, reflects the RSCT principle of **relative power**, where China perceives the US’s increasing involvement with Taiwan and its regional allies as a challenge to its strategic dominance in the region, undermining China’s political leverage and heightening tensions in cross-Strait relations.

Similarly, the interpretations of policy signals by both sides differ significantly. The process of transmitting and receiving these signals is inherently complex, as policy signals can range from powerful to weak, and their interpretation is highly subjective. This complexity is further heightened by internal political unrest within the US and the widespread use of new media, which adds layers of uncertainty and influence in how these signals are understood and acted upon. First, there has been an increase in the US Congress's power over foreign and security policy. Congress has been unusually supportive of Taiwan and has been more consistently uncompromising in its China policy than it was 10 years ago, especially in recent years. Congress has improved ties with Taiwan by persistently circumventing the administration's constraints on US policy toward Taiwan. Beijing's degree of worry has already increased due to the rising possibility that Congress may erode the minimal accord that China and the US have managed to establish. Furthermore, Congress will have more authority to intervene in US diplomatic and security matters due to the current political polarization in the country, the Biden administration's strong need for congressional support on important domestic agenda items, and the mistrust the Trump administration has fostered regarding the president's use of his or her diplomatic and security powers. This divergence in interpretations of policy signals, particularly the increasing influence of the US Congress on foreign and security policy, aligns with RSCT’s concept of institutional power, where domestic political dynamics, such as internal polarization, shape the external strategic behavior and decision-making, influencing the balance of power between the two sides.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In my opinion, several key long-term factors are shaping the security dynamics in the Taiwan Strait. A detailed investigation of these tendencies reveals five consequences. Firstly, the rewards for moderation are diminishing. While the “one China” framework has mostly benefited China, Taiwan, and the US, it nonetheless necessitates practical concessions from all three parties and a certain amount of uncertainty over Taiwan's position. Taiwan authorities have been permitted and encouraged to question the "one China" idea and argue that Taiwan is already an independent sovereign state that does not need to declare independence as a result of democratization and the population's increasing feeling of a distinct Taiwan identity. PRC authorities and important institutions like the military are becoming less accepting of Taiwan's present *de facto* independence as a result of Taiwan's aggressive actions and Chinese nationalism, particularly if Taiwan continues to march towards permanent separation from China. Since Taiwan's democratization has given Washington a new foundation for support, earlier limitations on political contacts have been loosened, and security cooperation with Taiwan has increased. Domestic political considerations are limiting policy flexibility and occasionally leading it in harmful ways in all three capitals.

Over the last 30 years, an ambiguous "one China" framework has been helpful in stabilising the security environment; however, as all three parties grow less inclined to put the required limits on their behaviour, its usefulness may be waning.

Second, there are potentially unstable interactions between trends. In terms of its security dilemma, China has accelerated its military modernization and placed more emphasis on measures to dissuade Taiwan independence as a result of Taiwanese authorities' attempts to move towards "creeping independence" in ways that Beijing views as undesirable. Taiwan's feeling of independence is strengthened by Beijing's threats, which also lessen desire for unification. The United States' perceived danger to Taiwan's democracy has also led it to extend its support for the island nation, particularly through increased security cooperation a move Beijing sees as a betrayal of the country's obligations under the three communiqués. Leaders in Taiwan have decided to cut defense spending and come to the conclusion that they may pursue independence without inciting a Chinese invasion as a result of growing confidence that the US will act on Taiwan's side. The detrimental effects of important trends on the stability of the cross-strait security environment might be amplified via interactions and feedback mechanisms.

Third, the conflict between China and Taiwan is involving the US. The US has made an effort to keep cordial ties with all parties while avoiding taking a stance in the status issue over Taiwan. Washington has stated its willingness to accept any peacefully reached agreement between the two parties and has worked to establish a secure and stable atmosphere that would enable Taiwan to negotiate on an equal footing. Taiwan and China both frequently try to sway American policy about cross-strait ties in the direction of better relations. China has explained why the US is becoming more adamantly opposed to Taiwan's independence by pointing to its collaboration in the fight against terrorism and in handling the nuclear problem in North Korea. Taiwan's authorities have gained increased political support and security guarantees from the US by leveraging democratization and China's military threats. As the military balance has shifted in China's favor, the US is now more actively involved in ensuring Taiwan's security. China believes that the US would intervene in the event of a confrontation. Although the US has tried to avoid choosing between China and Taiwan, it will be difficult to maintain a neutral stance given its growing security role in the Taiwan Strait. Despite efforts to stay neutral, Washington has been forced to engage more deeply in cross-strait relations to preserve the status quo.

Fourth, there is a mismatch between the tools at hand for policy and potentially destabilizing tendencies. Although they acknowledge that China has little ability to affect Taiwanese people's perceptions of their identity, Chinese academics express concern that the move towards a distinct Taiwan identity may render peaceful reunification unfeasible. The analysts understand that using military force to prevent Taiwan from becoming independent would not stop the trend towards a distinct Taiwan identity and may even be detrimental. Certain tendencies, like the growing economic integration on both sides of the strait, seem to follow their own logic independent of political policy. Although they have not been able to come up with a workable policy solution, Taiwanese government officials are concerned about the possible security ramifications of their country's growing economic reliance on China. Taiwan has encountered comparable challenges in reacting to China's endeavors to modernize its military. A window of opportunity for Taiwan to achieve independence, according to some commentators, may be closing as military and economic trends shift in Beijing's favour. In addition, the United States has occasionally struggled to muster diplomatic support in order to avert threats to the status quo, as seen by its fruitless attempts to dissuade Taiwan from organizing a vote in 2004.

China's belief that Taiwan's leaders are adopting salami tactics (a strategy where small, incremental actions are taken to achieve a larger goal, often done in a way that avoids provoking a direct confrontation) to advance towards independence without going over Beijing's red lines is arguably the most worrisome problem. Although Beijing has denounced every move taken by Taiwan, it has been hesitant to use the same military tactics as it did from 1995 to 1996. Most likely, this would entail a very restricted use of force, but it might also turn into a full-scale conflict including the US. More broadly, when leaders lack other options to deal with escalating risks, the mismatch between perceived negative trends and available policy tools may encourage them to adopt dangerous actions.

Fifth, there is a divergence between political and economic tendencies. Even while commercial and business relations between China and Taiwan continue to strengthen, political and security problems are increasing. The three economies are becoming more and more integrated economically as a result of items being created in Taiwan, manufactured in Chinese factories utilizing parts and technology imported from Taiwan, and then sold in American markets. Strong incentives for greater economic integration are provided by the complementarities between the economies. Trade and investment links generate interest groups that have a strong stake in stability and access to political leaders, in addition to increasing the costs of armed war. Strong economic linkages and rising security concerns cannot be sustained permanently, despite the fact that governments should be exceedingly cautious about deploying force due to the enormous direct and indirect costs of a military confrontation. Leaders will eventually have to decide between pursuing riskier political goals like independence or forced reunification and reaping the rewards of ongoing economic cooperation. Whether political or economic incentives are greater will be evident in the choices people make when compelled to make a decision.

A significant crisis in the Taiwan Strait might arise in the coming years if this trend continues, which seems likely given President Chen's intentions to seek constitutional amendments that would allow for a potential vote on Taiwan's status in the future. China is taking a slightly lengthier approach to military modernization and the development of a military option for unification because many of these initiatives would not be completed until 2008–2010 or later. However, China's expanding economy will enable Beijing to outspend Taipei in the long run, even if Taiwan reacts with more military reforms and the purchase of cutting-edge weapons. Furthermore, Taiwan's economic policies have not been able to overcome the potential strategic weakness posed by its growing economic dependency on China. There are

no simple policy answers for these long-term problems. These might encourage Chen to seize the chance to propel Taiwan closer to independence before longer-term negative trends irreversibly obstruct the path.

China's security dilemma over Taiwan arises from the growing mismatch between its political goals and the deepening economic ties between the two sides. As Taiwan's sense of identity strengthens, peaceful reunification becomes more difficult, but China realizes that using military force could backfire, potentially accelerating Taiwan move toward independence. Taiwan's increasing economic dependence on China further complicates the situation, as economic integration grows while political tensions rise. Taiwan's leaders push toward independence, and China's military modernization adds to the strain. These conflicting trends, compounded by rising nationalism in both Taiwan and China, make it harder to maintain stability and heighten the risk of future conflict. The security dilemma in this context reflects how China's efforts to ensure its security and political aims inadvertently escalate tensions with Taiwan, leading to a precarious situation where military or political actions to secure one side's position could destabilize the entire region.

Despite the depressing state of affairs overall, some patterns and recent advancements may contribute to greater stability. A wider range of perspectives and interests are able to influence foreign policy thanks to Taiwan's democracy and the pluralization of the Chinese foreign policymaking process. China fears that the Taiwan dispute would thwart its efforts to accomplish its "peaceful rise" and impede its ability to expand economically. The United States' anxieties over terrorism and its desire to control the nuclear situation in North Korea have contributed to an unanticipated improvement in ties between the two countries. While increasing nationalism in China and Taiwan as well as internal political incentives that penalize leaders for making prudent policy decisions work against these variables' encouragement of pragmatic and restrained approaches. Overall, it seems that the destabilizing trends are stronger. The existing unstable equilibrium will become more difficult to maintain despite the fact that no leader ever wants to start a war.

Hence, future academic research on the China–Taiwan political crisis must systematically assess evolving doctrinal shifts within the People's Liberation Army and their implications for potential military aggression against Taiwan, integrating gray-zone and cyber-coercion frameworks to anticipate Beijing's coercive strategies. Scholars should also examine how advancements in PLA amphibious assault readiness and precision missile deployments could alter cross-Strait deterrence dynamics, thereby heightening strategic

autonomy, balancing and hedging as well as security dilemmas in East Asia. Moreover, situating the China–Taiwan crisis within the context of the global world order is essential, as great-power competition reshapes multilateral institutions and normative architectures that underpin regional stability. Last but not the least, future studies must critically evaluate U.S. realistic interests in Taiwan, reconciling ideological commitments to democracy promotion with pragmatic calculations of economic interdependence and strategic deterrence, to craft policy frameworks capable of deterring Chinese aggression while sustaining the liberal international order.

a) Recommendations

Historical territorial conflicts, especially between China and Taiwan, shape the region’s security. Fears of domination and the struggle for strategic autonomy play a key role. Under Xi Jinping’s leadership, these issues have intensified. They affect not only bilateral relations but also broader dynamics in East Asia. The competition for spheres of influence, alongside China’s growing assertiveness, has created a volatile environment. To mitigate tensions, fostering dialogue, strengthening economic ties, and implementing confidence-building measures are essential steps. The international community must also play a proactive role in supporting peaceful resolutions, maintaining a delicate balance of power, and safeguarding regional stability. The following recommendations are offered:

(1) Strengthen Diplomatic Dialogue and Confidence-Building Measures

De-escalate the situation between China and Taiwan requires sustained diplomatic dialogue and confidence-building initiatives. Establishing formal communication channels can foster trust, reduce misunderstandings, and minimize risks of escalation. Confidence-building measures such as military transparency, joint regional security forums, and non-aggressive postures are essential for promoting stability. Regional stakeholders, including the US and Southeast Asian nations, should mediate these efforts to ensure a balanced approach to conflict resolution. The US, in particular, must shift away from escalatory rhetoric about “competition” with China and focus on constructive diplomacy that emphasizes sovereignty, cooperation, and mutual respect, especially regarding Taiwan, to build trust and avoid miscalculations.

(2) Promote Collaborative Engagement and Ensure Stability in Taiwan Relations

The US must transcend the zero-sum “Great Power Competition” narrative and focus on collaborating with China on global challenges such as climate change, health crises, and economic development. Prioritizing mutual interests can shift U.S.-China relations from

adversarial to cooperative, alleviating tensions over Taiwan and other sensitive matters. At the same time, the U.S. must uphold the “One China” policy, avoiding actions that could escalate tensions or encourage Taiwan to alter its status. A balanced approach that supports Taiwan's democracy and security while fostering regional stability is essential for lasting peace in the Taiwan Strait.

(3) Enhance Taiwan's Defensive Capabilities to Safeguard Regional Security

The US must strengthen its security partnership with Taiwan in alignment with the “One China” policy to uphold regional stability. This approach should focus on providing Taiwan with advanced defensive capabilities through strategic defense support, intelligence collaboration, and joint military training designed to deter potential threats without provoking escalatory responses from China. Arms sales should emphasize defensive systems that support the maintenance of the status quo while mitigating risks of misinterpretation or confrontation. Furthermore, the U.S. must work closely with Indo-Pacific allies to develop a robust regional security framework, ensuring a balanced strategy that deters aggression and preserves stability across the Taiwan Strait.

(4) Strengthen Multilateral Cooperation for Regional Security and Global Challenges

East Asian nations, including Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN members, should enhance multilateral security frameworks to address shared challenges and mitigate tensions in the region. A collective security arrangement focused on mutual defense, economic cooperation, and crisis management would serve as a stabilizing force amidst China-Taiwan tensions. External stakeholders, such as the U.S., should play an active role in fostering this cooperation. Simultaneously, the U.S. and China must prioritize collaboration on global challenges like climate change, water security, and public health. By placing emphasis areas of mutual interest, these efforts can build trust, reduce geopolitical risks, and promote stability in East Asia and beyond.

(5) Promote Economic Integration to Reduce Hostility

Economic ties between China, Taiwan, and the wider East Asian region are crucial in shaping the political environment. Growing economic interdependence creates mutual incentives for stability, as cooperation in trade often leads to reduced conflict. Efforts should focus on improving cross-Strait trade relations. Promoting Taiwan's integration into regional economic frameworks, like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), is

also important. Economic integration could shift the focus from military confrontation to peaceful coexistence and prosperity.

(6) Support Taiwan's Role in International Organizations

Although China maintains its position on Taiwan's status, international organizations can still offer opportunities for Taiwan's participation in non-political fields such as global health, climate change, and disaster relief. Supporting Taiwan's involvement in these areas, while respecting the One-China policy, can promote global cooperation and help reduce political tensions. This approach can help Taiwan gain international recognition for its democratic system while reducing Beijing's concerns over international efforts to challenge its sovereignty.

(7) Encourage People-to-People Exchange Programs

Fostering mutual understanding between the people of China and Taiwan is crucial for reducing long-term tensions. People-to-people exchanges, such as academic collaborations, cultural diplomacy, and grassroots initiatives, can help bridge the gap between both societies. These exchanges should focus on fostering an understanding of shared history, values, and aspirations, creating a foundation for peaceful coexistence. In the long run, a more informed public opinion on both sides can play a pivotal role in de-escalating tensions and supporting peaceful resolution efforts.

(8) Reinforce Regional Stability through Strategic Autonomy

Countries in the East Asian region should strengthen their strategic autonomy by balancing their relationships with both China and Taiwan. This means ensuring that these countries do not become overly reliant on one power and maintaining neutrality in the face of heightened tensions. Regional powers can prevent being drawn into an unnecessary conflict and can act as neutral facilitators in peace negotiations. Strategic autonomy will allow these countries to promote regional stability while ensuring their own security interests are not jeopardized by external pressures from either China or Taiwan.

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