

## United States Intervention on the Cross-Strait Escalation between China and Taiwan

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### ABSTRACT

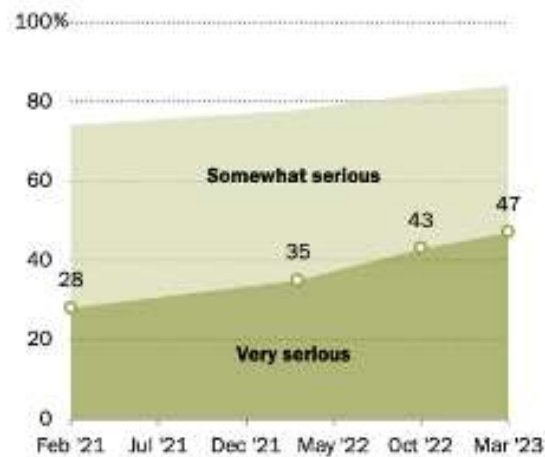
The changes occurring in the structure of the international system are undoubtedly influenced by various factors in the dynamics of interactions among nations. The success of a country in bolstering its material strength inherently poses a threat to other nations with strategic interests in the region. From a realist perspective, there is an observation of attempts by a hegemonic state to pursue its national interests by seeking to influence the capabilities of other nations. In the Cross-Strait interactions between Taiwan and China, the role of the United States is undoubtedly integral and determines the escalation of tension across the strait. Efforts to establish a sovereign and democratic government, coupled with Taiwan's strategic location in the projection of U.S. national interests, introduce a new layer of complexity to the structure of the international system. The increasingly close cooperation between the United States and Taiwan, particularly in military and economic aspects, will impede China's efforts to achieve reunification. The commitment of the United States to interpreting the One-China policy tends to change with each administration, inevitably escalating tensions in the region. Consequently, Taiwan remains a decisive factor in U.S. control in the region, especially in preserving democracy and attaining other strategic objectives.

## INTRODUCTION

As a superpower, the United States wields strong influence over the dynamics of the international system. In its effort to preserve influence and power within the global system, the United States employs various diplomatic strategies through diverse instruments to maintain its authority as a hegemonic force. The involvement of the United States in providing support to Taiwan takes the form of assistance aimed at enhancing its capacity for self-defence through military strength, gaining international recognition, and striving to establish a stable democratic government.

### Americans increasingly likely to see China-Taiwan tensions as a very serious problem for the U.S.

*% who say tensions between China and Taiwan are a \_\_\_ problem for the U.S.*



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 20-26, 2023.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: (Huang 2023, Pew Research Center)

Based on the results of a survey conducted in the United States in March 2023, 47% of the adult population in the United States perceives the tension between China and Taiwan as one of the significant threats and challenges for the United States. Several indicators showing this trend emerged within the American community after President Tsai Ing-wen's visit to the United States and meetings with high-ranking officials in the U.S. government, such as House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. From the perspective of the Chinese government, the high-level official visits between Taiwan and the United States signal a stronger, more interactive diplomatic relationship that could pose a threat, complicating the process of Taiwan's reunification with China. Therefore, any form of cooperation is strongly opposed by the Chinese government and would be met with increased military activities in the strait region (Huang, 2023).

There are several reasons that motivate the United States to continue supporting the independence of Taiwan. First, Taiwan's strategic location in the Asia-Pacific region has significant implications for the security interests of the

United States and its allies. Taiwan is situated very close to key U.S. allies such as Japan and the Philippines, and it plays a crucial role in maintaining control over the waters and airspace around Taiwan. Additionally, Taiwan is an island with a democratic governance system, serving as a real-life example of the successful implementation of Western culture in the region. This provides a certain credibility for the United States and its allies, especially during a period of increasing authoritarianism.

The last point is the growing economic significance of Taiwan, particularly in the global semiconductor industry. Taiwan plays a crucial role as a vital trade route, influencing the movement of goods and services in ongoing global trade activities (Bellocchi, 2023).

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### ***Realism***

Examining the conflict between China and Taiwan from a realist perspective underscores the emphasis on the anarchic nature of the international system and the dominance of states as key actors with power that determines the security dynamics among nations. The realist perspective assumes that states are the primary actors in the international arena, motivated by their national interests and efforts to gain power. In the realist view, interactions among China, Taiwan, and the United States are seen as efforts to acquire power and influence. All involved actors strive to pursue their national interests and a certain level of security.

In the economic interactions that take place, realists argue that states will use foreign trade and investment policies as instruments to enhance national interests and power. From the realist perspective, China's economic influence on Taiwan is seen as an attempt to increase influence over Taiwan's political dynamics and diminish Taiwan's sovereignty. Similarly, Taiwan's decision to deepen economic ties with China, which may be viewed as irrational from an economic perspective, can be understood as a political consideration and an effort to attain national security.

In conclusion, the realist perspective argues that the conflict between China and Taiwan is driven by power dynamics in the international system, national interests, and efforts to secure themselves in the anarchic nature of the international system. The realist perspective sees conflict and confrontation as inherent factors in international relations, especially when the interests of major states are threatened. This interpretation provides a framework for understanding that strategic calculations and power dynamics determine tension and relations between China and Taiwan. The emphasis on the primary role of states, interests, and efforts to gain power can create stagnation in an ongoing conflict (Löhner, 2022).

### ***One China Policy***

In examining the relationship between China and Taiwan, the One China policy is a joint agreement that has been articulated and discussed together with the United States since 1979 when formal diplomatic relations were established

with China. This policy serves as the foundation in the Sino-US Joint Communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances, all of which promote a mutual agreement regarding Taiwan's status. The main argument behind this policy is the recognition of China's sovereignty as the sole governing authority, including Taiwan, and acknowledging China's position in the international structure with Taiwan being a part of China. However, this policy also allows the United States to maintain relations with Taiwan in various aspects such as economics, culture, and support for Taiwan to strengthen its defence through arms sales.

In the previous agreement embedded in the August 17 Communiqué, the United States clearly acknowledged there is only one China in the world, that Taiwan is part of China, and that the government of the People's Republic of China is the only legal government that represents China. There are also a few agreements on weapons selling's to Taiwan and gives any military assistance. Though, the United States has repeatedly reneged on its commitments on One China Policy and implemented frequent arms sales and built stronger military ties. These actions are considered a threat and damage China's national sovereignty and security, threaten peace and stability across the strait, and could harm Sino-U.S. bilateral relations (Maizland, 2023).

## **METHODOLOGY**

In writing this publication, the methodology employed involves a comprehensive analysis of U.S. foreign policy documents through official statements and speeches, publications from research institutions, international journals, and media sources. This is done to identify and understand the stated motivations for the United States to intervene more deeply. Additionally, one of the methods used is to conduct a comparative analysis of diplomatic interactions and statements from Taiwan and China before, during, and after U.S. intervention. This allows for a further analysis of changes in Taiwan's international recognition and its diplomatic relations with other countries in response to U.S. intervention.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Form of Cooperation between the United States and Taiwan***

Taiwan and the United States have committed to enhancing strategic collaboration in various domains such as the economy, national defence, and trade, with a simultaneous focus on reinforcing international cooperation to address regional challenges. A foremost priority within this cooperative framework is the establishment of mutually beneficial trade and investment relationships. The Trade First Agreement Implementation Act, signed by President Joe Biden in August, forms the foundation of this collaboration, with its second phase currently undergoing negotiation (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China, 2023).

In matters of national security, the United States consistently lends support to Taiwan's defence system through the sale of arms, significantly aiding Taiwan in safeguarding itself from regional threats. An integral facet of

international collaboration is being fostered through global cooperation and training frameworks aimed at addressing issues such as epidemic prevention, countering misinformation, climate change, and other strategic challenges. The increasingly developing bilateral trade relations contribute to building a sustainable and resilient economy. Consequently, stability and peace in the strait relationships play a pivotal role in supporting the bilateral cooperation between the United States and Taiwan

The Council on Foreign Relations, through the Independent Task Force, has been closely monitoring U.S.-Taiwan relations in response to a more assertive China. Constructive cooperation spans various aspects, including strategic collaboration in trade discussions, expanding military-to-military cooperation, joint efforts to promote Taiwan's international standing, and fostering people-to-people ties. The focus of U.S.-Taiwan relations is on improving substantive ties rather than engaging in symbolic gestures that could potentially alter the status quo and provoke more aggressive activity from China (Gordon & Mullen, 2023).

On the economic and trade cooperation front, negotiations are underway for a bilateral trade agreement between the United States and Taiwan, aiming to deepen economic ties and solidify Taiwan's position as a trusted economic and trading partner. In terms of military-to-military cooperation, the U.S. aims to assist Taiwan in modernizing its military capabilities to deter Chinese aggression. Diplomatic and international collaboration are also being strengthened to enhance people-to-people ties and boost Taiwan's participation in international organizations through various communication channels (Gordon & Mullen, 2023).

U.S. imports from Taiwan as a % of its global imports	
Marine engines, parts	20.9%
Iron and steel, advanced	19.6%
Computer accessories	15.7%
Semiconductors	13.6%
Blank tapes, audio & visual	13.2%
Motorcycles and parts	11.7%
Telecommunications equipment	9.0%
Wood, glass, plastic	7.9%
Photo equipment	7.3%
Toys, games, and sporting goods	7.2%
U.S. exports to Taiwan as a % of its global exports	
Commercial vessels, other	27.7%
Wood, glass, plastic	10.8%
Military apparel and footwear	9.5%
Military trucks, armored vehicles, etc.	9.0%
Industrial machines, other	8.0%
Semiconductors	7.9%
Steelmaking materials	5.7%

### Taiwan & U.S. trade relations 2023

Source: (Hsiao, 2023 Global Taiwan Institute)

The trade relationship between the United States and Taiwan is projected to become even stronger, especially following a significant framework in the

U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade. This initiative encompasses several areas of strategic cooperation, such as trade facilitation, standard regulations, and efforts to support the development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) through various economic dialogues and other initiatives. Based on the composition of traded commodities between the United States and Taiwan, the largest imports from Taiwan to the United States consist of machinery and ship spare parts. Meanwhile, the major exports from the United States to Taiwan include commercial vessels, wood, glass, and plastic (Hsiao, 2023).

The United States and Taiwan have acknowledged the pivotal role of training in their security cooperation strategy, unveiling new initiatives that underscore its significance. Among these initiatives is the deployment of US advisors to Taiwan and the training of US special forces personnel, specifically geared towards simulated urban combat scenarios in Taiwan. In a reciprocal move, Taiwan plans to dispatch a combined-arms battalion to the United States for training, concurrently extending the mandatory military service requirement from four months to one year. These endeavors assume critical importance in enhancing small-unit tactics, along with fundamental soldiering skills like marksmanship and communication in disrupted environments.

The heightened emphasis on training emerges as the new cornerstone of the security cooperation relationship between the United States and Taiwan. While this shift may expose Taiwan to a heightened level of short-term risk, it is deemed essential to capitalize on a period wherein the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is perceived as not fully capable of successfully invading Taiwan while overcoming counter-intervention forces. The potential for a higher return from increased risk lies in cultivating a military more adept at utilizing new platforms and weapons to their full potential, thereby bolstering deterrence throughout the decade of maximum danger.

In summary, these developments mirror the evolving nature of security cooperation between the United States and Taiwan, encompassing training, strategic considerations, and military capabilities. As both parties continue collaborative efforts, it is probable that further initiatives will be devised to fortify regional security and ensure the safeguarding of Taiwan (Chan, 2023).

### ***Increasing Economic Power of China Contributes to the United States' Approach to Taiwan***

The significantly growing economic and military strength of China has influenced the United States' approach to Taiwan. Changes in dynamics in the Taiwan Strait have prompted the United States to reassess its One-China policy. Several events, including the rise in economic power, military capabilities, and continuous pressure exerted on Taiwan, pose major security challenges for the United States. The response from the United States involves updated legislative regulations, including full support for Taiwan, high-level government meetings, efforts to secure international recognition, and an increase in arms sales to Taiwan. This illustrates a shift in the United States' strategy to adapt to the new global environment through an approach aimed at creating stability in the region. The United States has approved pro-Taiwan legislation, such as the

Taiwan Travel Act and the Taipei Act, demonstrating support for Taiwan's implementation of democracy and security.

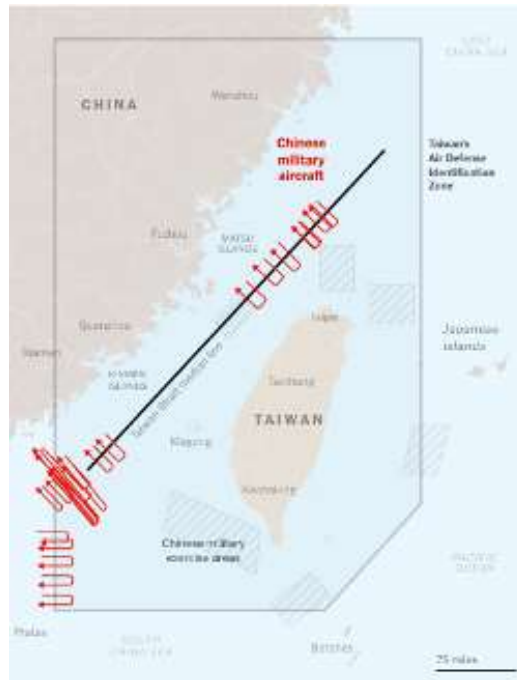
The United States' approach to Taiwan is governed by its One-China policy; it can be seen from several official documents, such as the Taiwan Relations Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1979. The United States approach aims to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and it implores both Beijing and Taipei to maintain the status quo. The United States also aims to maintain an interactive unofficial relationship with Taiwan through continuing to sell defence equipment to its military, despite Beijing's objections (Maizland, 2023).

As geopolitical tensions grow, economic interdependence between the West and the emerging world has been challenged by the loss of purchasing power for the middle class in the developed world, particularly in the United States, as manufacturing jobs were shifted overseas. Growing geopolitical tensions between China and the West, the impact of the trade war initiated by President Donald Trump against China, and the increasing mistrust between China and the West. However, it does not specifically address the relationship between China's economic power and the United States' approach to Taiwan (Herrero, 2022).

### *Implication for the Regional Security*

China's increasingly assertive behaviour in the region manifests as more coercive activity around the Taiwan Strait. This is perceived as a provocative action that has the potential to disrupt global peace and stability. Consequently, Taiwan has become a priority for the United States in shaping its military orientation in global interactions. The evolving situation holds particular implications for regional security, contributing to shifts in the balance of power and the potential escalation of tension in the area. The United States' efforts to maintain stability in the Taiwan Strait and provide support for Taiwan's security undoubtedly carry implications for the Indo-Pacific region, aiming to prevent specific conflict-prone areas and uphold peace and stability in the region (Yuan, 2023).

The growing economic and military strength between China and Taiwan undoubtedly carries implications for the United States and its allies. From an economic standpoint, the economic interdependence between China and Taiwan is likely to have global consequences in armed conflicts across various regions. This could significantly impact the economic interests of the United States and its allies, especially in the Asia-Pacific region. On the military front, the evolving military relations between Taiwan and China could create a military balance in the Taiwan Strait, significantly influencing the dynamics of regional security and the strategic interests of the United States. The close relationship between China and Taiwan can affect the U.S. commitment to supporting Taiwan and may lead to potential changes in U.S. policies and strategic considerations (Bellocchi, 2023).



### **Incursions of Chinese military aircraft**

Source: (Hernandez, 2022).

Over the last few years, tensions between China and Taiwan have been evident through military interactions across the straits. China has been deploying its military aircraft and drones near Taiwan's territory and Japan's outer islands. This activity poses a significant threat to security and stability in the region and could potentially escalate arms competition.

In the Taiwan Strait's median line, there has been active military engagement. In 2022 alone, there were hundreds of instances of fighter jets and other warplanes detected during incursions. While China clarified these exercises as capability tests, the actions demonstrated a consistent and increasingly aggressive pattern (Hernandez, 2022).

The approaching Taiwan election prompted increased assertiveness from the Chinese military. Taiwan reported heightened presence of Chinese warplanes and warships around the island, including increased aircraft activity along the median line. Ahead of the election, it is crucial for Taiwan to maintain relations with China to support the presidential and parliamentary elections. Strategic measures being implemented include joint combat readiness patrols and constructive dialogues with China to resolve dynamics between political parties and manage involvement with the United States (Reuters, 2023).

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Addressing the complexities inherent in Cross-Strait relations necessitates a comprehensive strategy due to the intricate nature of interactions involved. A central issue for both parties revolves around the One China dispute, linked closely to a commitment problem where unilateral concessions are avoided to maintain international validity and domestic legitimacy. The changing dynamics among the United States, China, and Taiwan underscore

the strategic dimensions encompassing economic, political, and security considerations that shape the region. As a global hegemon, the United States is strategically intertwined in tensions across the Taiwan Strait, driven by a mix of geopolitical interests and a dedication to upholding stability and democratic values in the area. The research question serves as a framework, shedding light on the motivations behind U.S. involvement and revealing a multifaceted approach that includes economic cooperation, military support, and diplomatic efforts aimed at strengthening ties with Taiwan.

The One China policy acts as a foundational aspect of the diplomatic framework, allowing the United States to engage with Taiwan while acknowledging China's sovereignty. Realism provides a theoretical lens for interpreting power dynamics, emphasizing the pursuit of national interest and inherent tensions in the international system. The implications for regional security are significant, with China's assertive behaviour in the Taiwan Strait posing challenges and potential disruptions to global peace. The increased economic and military strength of China and Taiwan necessitate a careful balancing act for the United States to maintain stability while upholding its strategic interests.

The incursions of Chinese military aircraft and heightened tensions in the Taiwan Strait highlight immediate threats to security, demanding diplomatic finesse and strategic foresight. As the United States deepens its involvement, the path forward involves navigating complex geopolitical terrain, addressing security concerns, and fostering diplomatic solutions. The commitment to Taiwan's defence, economic cooperation, and promotion of democratic values remains central, even as the U.S. navigates challenges posed by an assertive China. The importance of maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait reverberates globally, emphasizing the interconnectedness of geopolitical relationships in the 21st century.

In his New Year's message, Song Tao, the head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, has called on the people of Taiwan to endorse the idea of "peaceful reunification," aligning with President Xi Jinping's recent assertion that China's unification with Taiwan is inevitable. Emphasizing that this objective is a shared aspiration for both sides of the Taiwan Strait, Song urged the people of Taiwan to contribute to the restoration of cross-strait relations, fostering peaceful development and eventual reunification. Despite these calls, Taiwan's government rejects China's claims to sovereignty, with major political parties in Taiwan asserting that the determination of their future lies solely with the Taiwanese people. China has proposed a "one country, two systems" model, which has not garnered support from any mainstream Taiwanese party. Despite the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections in Taiwan, Song's message did not directly address the election. China has escalated military pressure and issued economic threats against Taiwan as the elections draw near (Blanchard, 2024).

## FURTHER STUDY

Every research is subject to limitations; thus, you can explain them here and briefly provide suggestions to further investigations.

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