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US-China Conflict Over Taiwan: Another War?

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ABSTRACT

The relations between Taiwan and China have been uncertain and with the US intervention in Taiwan and China in the light of recent interaction between Taiwan and the US, what will be the future? In this research paper, we will be focusing on the current tension between China and Taiwan and the US's role in it, and how will US benefit from It as Taiwan dominates the technology in the terms of manufacturing semiconductor chips on which the US is heavily dependent, and why China is putting pressure or taking the help of aggressive measures to take Taiwan under it. We will also be learning about the history of Taiwan and China and will also be looking into the possible ways the recent tension might turn in the future.

Keywords: *US, China, Taiwan, ROC, KMT, DPP, cross-strait conflict.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tension has risen in Taiwan since the visit of the US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi which has irked China a lot and this has led to strained relationships between the US and China also. ²When Chinese forces attacked some of Taiwan's outlying islands four years later, American officials threatened China with nuclear strikes, forcing Mao to back down once more. Taiwan, officially called the Republic of China, has been independent of China since 1949. It's an island that is geographically separated from China. China or officially known as the People's Republic of China in the past has viewed Taiwan as a part of its territory and has vowed to unify it at any cost even if it means using force. Taiwan, which is governed by a democratic government, has had differing opinions on the status of its relationship with China. ³The tension which has recently escalated between China and Taiwan is not something new as the cross-strait tension has persisted between the two countries in the past, but it got escalated to a higher

¹ Author is a student at Amity Law School, Noida, India.

² BEIJING, TAIPEI, AND WASHINGTON, DC, HOW THE CRISIS OVER TAIWAN WILL CHANGE US- CHINA RELATIONS? ,(Aug 11th 2022), https://www.economist.com/china/2022/08/11/how-the-crisis-over-taiwan-will-change-us-china-relations?ppccampaignID=&ppcadID=&ppcgclid=&gclid=Cj0KCQjwT_qgBhDFARIsABcDjOcJadS582EHWP3yEz6Wod3XdtdVKKHK07yK7IwDH0PBNEmuJ9yTBkaAok2EALw_wcB&gclid=aw.ds

³ MAIZLAND, LINDSAY. "WHY CHINA- TAIWAN RELATIONS ARE SO TENSE?" AUGUST 3,2022. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-relations-tension-us-policy-biden>

scale since the election of Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen in the year 2016.

President Tsai Ing-wen has refused to give her acceptance in the increased cross-strait ties with China that her predecessor, Ma Ying – Joe had countersigned. Whereas, after the visit of Nancy Pelosi Beijing's action became more aggressive towards Taiwan by raiding Taiwan's air space including flying fighter jets near the island.

II. WAS TAIWAN A PART OF CHINA?

Beijing maintains that there is only one China and that Taiwan is a part of it. According to it, PRC is the only legitimate government of China. ⁴They assert that the island is bound by an agreement of understanding called the 1992 Consensus which was made between a representative of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang party. However, both sides don't agree on the contents of the consensus as according to PRC, Chinese President Xi Jinping has stated that the two sides of the strait belong ⁵to one China and both the government will work together to seek national reunification whereas the KMT it meant "One China different interpretation" with ROC as one China. However, the KMT was inclined to support closer relations with Beijing over Taiwan's independence. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) which is the rival to the KMT party has never supported the very idea or the agreement of the 1992 Consensus. President Tsai has also strongly refused this consensus.

President Tsai's views became more prominent after 2016, the inaugural address where she stated that she was elected based on and in accordance with the Constitution of ROC and would carry on the cross-strait affairs accordingly. Whereas Beijing was agitated and rejected this formulation and as a result of this, they cut off official ties with Taiwan. Under the "one country, two systems" population model, Xi repeated the long-standing proposal of integrating Taiwan into the mainland. This was the very same strategy that was applied to Hong Kong, and they were also guaranteed the ability to preserve its political and economic systems and were granted a high degree of autonomy, but such a framework is considered unpopular by the Taiwanese public and in accordance to the recent example where there has been a recent crackdown by Beijing on Hong Kong's freedom. This particular framework has been aggressively rejected by both President Tsai and the KMT party jointly. ⁶Taiwan's top representative in Washington Hsiao Bi-khim has said Beijing's aggression in the wake of Pelosi's visit had spurred interest

⁴ LINDSAY MAIZLAND, WHY CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS ARE SO TENSE., COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, (Aug. 7, 2022,4:45pm(EST)), <https://www.cfr.org/background/china-taiwan-relations-tension-us-policy-biden>

⁵ KAKOLI NATH, CHINA TAIWAN CONFLICT: IS TAIWAN A PART OF CHINA? , FINOLOGY LEGAL, (Aug. 4, 2022), <https://blog.finology.in/Legal-news/china-taiwan-conflict>

⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/8/french-us-delegations-visit-taiwan-as-tension-with-china-festers>

from parliaments around the world to send visitors to the island.

III. IS TAIWAN A MEMBER OF THE UN OR NOT?

Taiwan considers itself to be a separate state, but it remains to be seen whether other organizations and countries recognize it as such. The reason is as China does not give nor it recognizes it as a state. China rejects Taiwan's membership in UN agencies and international organizations. Taiwan however regularly protests against its exclusion from many of these international organizations, US, on the other hand, has been pushing the international organization for Taiwan's meaningful participation in such organizations.

During the Covid – 19 pandemic, Beijing pressurized the WHO (World Health Organisation) to continue to bar Taiwan even though it was the one country that mounted to be one of the world's most effective responses to the Covid-19 pandemic in the first 2 years. According to resourceful information, only 14 states have recognized and maintained official diplomatic ties with Taiwan these are Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Paraguay, Marshall Island, St Vincent, etc. It has also been seen in history that no government has ever maintained simultaneous ties with both China and Taiwan.

IV. US RELATIONSHIP WITH TAIWAN

In 1979 the US established formal diplomatic relations with China and also simultaneously it broke its diplomatic ties and also revoked its mutual defense treaties formally with Taiwan. But even after this US still maintains close and healthy unofficial ties with Taiwan under the terms of the decade-old Taiwan Relation Act, which refers to facilitating commercial, cultural, and also other exchanges through the AIT which is the de facto US embassy in Taipei. The US still sells defense equipment even after Beijing has consistently urged the US against it and has asked the US to sever all its ties with Taiwan.

The US approach is based on its One China policy which is specifically based on several documents namely the three US-China communique reached in the subsequent years 1972, 1978, and 1982, and the Taiwan Relation Act which was passed by the US Congress in the year 1979, etc. the above statement stated that they 'acknowledge' the Chinese position that there is one China, and that Taiwan is a part of China, and also the fact that PRC is the only sole legal government of China. But, here according to US officials the word 'acknowledge' does not imply that the US accepts China's position.

During President Donald Trump's tenure as the President of the US, they deepened their ties with Taiwan even after the Chinese objection which included selling more than \$18 billion

worth of arms to the military. Donald Trump had also talked with Tsai by telephone just ahead of her inauguration the was seen for the first time as the highest level of Contact happened between the two sides since 1979. He had also sent several senior administration officials including a cabinet member to Taipei and also during his last day in office, the State Department eliminated the long-held restriction governing where and how the US official can meet their Taiwanese counterparts. The same goes with President Joe Biden who also administered a similar approach by continuing the sales of arms and also affirming Trump's decision to allow US officials to meet freely with the Taiwanese official. Plus, Joe Biden was the first US president who invited a Taiwanese representative to attend the presidential inauguration.

Taiwan is a highly advanced country whose economic production is estimated to be \$ 786 billion in concerning goods and services as of the year 2021.⁷ The US and Taiwan have deep and also grown commercial and trade ties which also in a way advance the US's interest and also create economic opportunities in the US. Since the year 2020, both countries under the auspices of AIT and TECRO have held the Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue to enhance economic and commercial ties between the two and also include supply chain security and investment, screening, health, science, etc.

Taiwan is US's eighth-largest trading partner, and the US is Taiwan's second-largest trading partner.⁸ US timely exports goods and services to this cross-strait island. Taiwan's cumulative investment in the US was nearly \$ 137 billion in 2020. Science and Technology Agreement was signed by AIT and TECRO in 2020 to increase scientific cooperation and joint research. These countries also engage in Joint scientific cooperation which includes the areas of meteorology, nuclear science, environmental protection, thoracic cancer research, etc. the people ties between both countries are very strong and it has been growing since. According to data in the year 2019, travel in terms of business and pleasure from Taiwan to the US saw an increase of 70% since Taiwan became a member of the US Visa Waiver Program in November 2012.

V. CURRENT TENSION BETWEEN CHINA AND TAIWAN

Recently in the year 2022, the relationship between the two countries appeared to have deteriorated sharply following the visit of Ms. Nancy Pelosi which Beijing has strongly condemned. This has resulted in China carrying out heavy military exercises mainly focusing on six danger zones around Taiwan, and it has raided the air and the water zones of this island

⁷ BROWN, DAVID. "CHINA AND TAIWAN A REALLY SIMPLE GUIDE". AUGUST 8, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59900139>

⁸ BROWN, DAVID. "CHINA AND TAIWAN A REALLY SIMPLE GUIDE". AUGUST 8, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-59900139>

and this has worsened and increased the tension between China and Taiwan. Last year in 2021 China appeared to ramp up the pressure by sending military aircraft into Taiwan's Air Defence zone. According to reports it was seen that last year the number of aircraft had reportedly peaked in the month of October with a high number of 56 incursions in a single day.

As tension has arisen between the two countries elsewhere relations have also deteriorated between US and China as the US is supporting Taiwan. Although the US follows the policy of strategic ambiguity, for decades it has attempted to maintain this delicate balance. But President Joe Biden has seemingly rejected the policy stating that several times the US would come to Taiwan's defense if ever China attacked. The White House has backed President Joe Biden's Statement stating that the policy has not changed but it's the President who ultimately gets to decide how to respond.

As a result of the US selling Taiwan \$1.1 billion worth of weapons, China has expressed anger. Also included in this proposal is a radar system for tracking incoming strikes and anti-ship missiles. The package includes a \$655m radar warning system and \$355m for 60 Harpoon missiles, which are capable of sinking ships. The Pentagon's Defense Security Cooperation Agency estimates the program will cost \$85.6 million for Sidewinder air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles. The State Department said the deal was "essential for Taiwan's security" and urged Beijing to cease military, diplomatic, and economic pressure against Taiwan. Taiwan remains committed to modernizing its armed forces and maintaining a credible defensive capability, the spokesperson noted.

Moreover, Washington has consistently supported Taiwan politically and militarily, without explicitly promising to defend it from Chinese Attack, During the past year, special forces from the United States have trained with Taiwan's military, including Marine commandos on maritime operations.

VI. WHY IS TAIWAN SO IMPORTANT FOR THE ENTIRE WORLD

So much of all the everyday electronic equipment from phones to laptops is powered by Computer chips made in Taiwan. By one measure a single Taiwanese company that is TSMC has over half of the world's market. It also dominates the global production of computer chips that 65%. Its semiconductor chip industry is booming despite cross-strait tensions, making Taiwan the world's top semiconductor chip contract manufacturer. Companies in Taiwan were responsible for more than 60% of the revenue generated by the world's semiconductor contract manufacturers in 2020.

TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, and Apple's top supplier are largely responsible for that.⁹ It is one of only two companies in the world (the other is South Korea-based Samsung) that has the technological know-how to make the smallest and most advanced chips and it manufactures more than 90 percent of them.

¹⁰The meeting between Nancy Pelosi and Taiwan majorly happened to convince TSMC, on which the US is heavily dependent to establish a manufacturing base in the US and simultaneously to stop making advanced chips for Chinese companies. US has from the start been supporting Taiwan, but recently Taiwan's autonomy has become a very important geopolitical interest for the US because of the island's dominance of the semiconductor manufacturing market. This is one of the reasons that both Countries are somewhat after Taiwan.

This is also the very reason why the US has been trying hard to attract TSMC to its country to increase its domestic chip production capacity. Recently the US Congress has just passed the Chips and Science Act, which aims to provide \$52 billion in subsidies to support semiconductor manufacturing in the US. But there is a catch to it, that is the company will only receive the Chip Act funding if they agree not to manufacture any advanced semiconductors for Chinese companies. This also gives us an indication of the fact that now TSMC and many others will have to choose between doing business in China and the US because it is seen that the cost of manufacturing in the US is deemed to be too high without any government subsidies.

As a result, this may also be part of the US-China tech war, in which the US seeks to constrain China's technological development and prevent it from exercising global tech leadership.

In the year 2020, the Trump administration-imposed sanctions on the Chinese giant tech Huawei with the motive to cut the company ties with TSMC on which it was reliant for the production of its high-end Semiconductors which were needed for its 5G infrastructure business. Huawei had become the world's leading supplier of 5G network equipment, but the US government had feared that its Chinese origin would pose a security threat. The sanction is still in place to stop other countries from using Huawei 5G.

⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-62775544>

¹⁰ RYAN, MAIRA. "TAIWAN DOMINATES THE WORLD'S SUPPLY OF COMPUTER CHIPS – NO WONDER THE US IS WORRIED." AUGUST 6, 2022, [HTTPS://M.THEWIRE.IN/ARTICLE/WORLD/TAIWAN-DOMINATES-SUPPLY-COMPUTER-CHIPS-SEMICONDUCTORS-US/AMP](https://m.thewire.in/article/world/taiwan-dominates-supply-computer-chips-semiconductors-us/amp)

The US goal appears to be to eliminate its dependence on the Chinese or Taiwanese supply chains for its " emerging and foundation technologies. All in all, Pelosi's trip to Taiwan was more than just Taiwan's critical place in the tech war. The country's dominance on the most important has made it very important and it can likely heighten the existing tension between China and US.

VII. GLOBAL IMPACT

Many experts have predicted that any escalation in Taiwan will surely have an impact on trade and security across the whole Indo – Pacific region. There is also a possibility that this assault may lead to western sanctions on China in the same way just like President Vladimir Putin had to face. It has also been stated that these sanctions can have serious impacts on the global economy. The imposing of financial sanctions on China could restrict international financing as well as severely reduce the flow of the US dollar, which remains China's key to international trade and market access.

VIII. WILL THERE BE A WAR?

This has been the biggest concern for all nations across the globe mainly for the US as China's growing military capabilities, as well as the deterioration in cross-strait relations, could spark conflict. These kinds of conflicts have the largest potential to lead to a US-China confrontation. This is all because China has not stepped back using all means of force to achieve Taiwan under it and the US has not backed down in defending Taiwan if China attacks. Many scholars are making speculation that China can try to invade Taiwan within the next decade whereas many disagree on this too.

¹¹So, in light of the Recent Russia – Ukraine debate, some analysts have argued that whatever happened between these two countries can embolden Beijing to invade Taiwan similarly or it can be that Beijing could become more cautious after witnessing Russia's challenges. It's a known fact that Taiwan likely does not have the capabilities to defend itself against a Chinese attack without any external help.

Although Taiwan's President Tsai and the DPP have prioritized increasing defense spending, with a budget of nearly \$17 billion, this is just half what China is estimated to spend on its military, which is 22 times.

It has been speculated that China might launch an attack on Taiwan if it tacitly supports Russia's

¹¹ WOOD, RICHARD "WHAT IS BEHIND THE CHINA TAIWAN DISPUTE.", AUGUST 11, 2022. <https://www.9news.com.au/world/china-taiwan-tensions-explainer-what-is-behind-long-running-dispute/04749e94-19c6-4dc2-9482-1061bde59e87>

war on Ukraine. China has avoided criticizing Russia's action since January 24, blaming the US and NATO for provocations, and blasting sanctions imposed on Moscow. Increasing military readiness and wartime preparations have been made by the Taiwanese government in response to fears of an invasion. China has increased the number of missiles and amphibious ships in its arsenal, which are essential for crossing the 200km-long Taiwan Strait to the island, according to a study released by the Economic and Security Review Commission between the US and China in 2015.

IX. CONCLUSION

At last, I would like to conclude that after analyzing all the areas and their potential impacts one thing is very clear if a war erupts between China and Taiwan it will severely affect the entire world and whether the US will be defending Taiwan as per its statement is still not clear because the US has always tried to pursue its national interest and does not care what happens to the other nations or countries and China has always followed the wolf warrior diplomacy and it will go to any length to bring Taiwan under its control but what will be its ultimate result is still unknown to us as this might will also lead to economic catastrophe.

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