



CHINA - TAIWAN DISPUTE AND THE ROLE OF UNITED STATES: WAR RISKS AND CONFLICT

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Abstract

In this article, I discussed the increasing war risks and conflict between China and US on Taiwan and between China and Taiwan on the independence of Taiwan. The study focuses on the basic questions like what if US actually defends Taiwan? and what happens if China invades and attacks on Taiwan? Also, why is Taiwan so beneficial and important for Taiwan as an island? China rejected Taiwan as part of the United Nations because of unhealthy relations and because they don't recognise them as a separate state. This limitizes the membership of states. It is said that the United States of America continue to send military and defence equipment to Taiwan. The research has employed qualitative methodology under the post-positivist paradigm. The study in conducted under the lens of realism theory. The research concludes at the noticeable point that the current situation going on between China US and Taiwan is quite sensitive and that the year 2022 is going to be quite interesting. US relationship with the island can result in the confrontation of China and US. There is a big question mark on the defence of Taiwan by US.

Keywords: Taiwan, China, United States, Defense, Military.

Introduction:

The People's Republic of China and Taiwan are on aggressive terms with each other. Taiwan is separated from China and it is governed independently. The nationalism



government took over the administration of China and it contested its power on the mainland. The political leaders in China have adopted a different view point on China and Taiwan relations. Cross-strait tensions have been developed between China and Taiwan since the elections of 2016. (Maizland, 2021) China is not ready to accept Taiwan as separated from them completely. And for this purpose, China even rejected Taiwan's place in the United Nations. Their conflict could be used by other countries for their benefit. Beijing even took some aggressive actions against Taiwan through its fighter jets. It attacked near the island. China also faced failure of a lot of plans. It tried to destroy Taiwan's tourism sector but all in vain. The United States of America is taking complete advantage of the conflict between China and Taiwan which could result in War Confrontation between China and United states of America.

China, the largest country of Asia is currently the rising power of the world. It has developed diplomatic relations with a lot 177 countries of the world and this is the most common reason of its progress and development. Since 2019, China has had the most diplomatic missions of any country in the world. Its one of the superpowers in the world and there is a clear prediction of China leading all over the world rather than America. Though it has Diplomatic relations with other countries but has cross-strait tensions with the Republic of China commonly known as Taiwan. No super power could tolerate its part being separated from them and it will make every possible attempt to gain its part back either hook or by crook. The relationship between China and Taiwan is complex due to the political status of Taiwan. China considers Taiwan as a break-away province.

ROC came into being in the year 1912 in China. During that time, Taiwan was being ruled by Japan. It was a colonial rule which was a result of 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. (Taiwan.gov.tw, 2021) Taiwan is an island commonly known as the Republic of China (ROC). Taiwan has its own democratically elected government and it's a home of twenty-three million people. The people disagree with the Chinese government as they call Taiwan as a breakaway province. Also, the Chinese government sees Taiwan as part of China again in the future. But the people of Taiwan consider themselves as an independent nation whether or not independence is officially declared. China wants the reunification of China and Taiwan for the progress and development of the country. For that purpose, it gave the formula of 'One Country Two System' under which Taiwan would be given separate significance but Taiwan rejected the offer. (BBC news , 2021). But Taiwan relaxed the rules on China on visits. In 1991, Taiwan proclaimed the War on the People's Republic of China on the mainland to be over. China conducted a political session in 2004. China got the benefit to use 'unfair means' against Taiwan through the law if Taiwan tried to take its roots out of China. In 2016, Taiwan's current president Tsai



Ing-wen was elected. She is leading the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). It's definitely tilted towards the independence of China.

United States of America is the superpower of the world. No Leading power could the other in competition. Seeing China as the rising power America is using every possible means to see the downfall of China. On January, 1979 the United States of America and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations with each other. At that time, US tried to develop unofficial relations with the Republic of China as well. United States of America intentionally did that after seeing the complex terms of China and Taiwan. China also objected on the United States of America on recognizing Taiwan as separate island. China objected on US having the diplomatic relations with the both People's Republic of China and the Republic of China. Having relations with Taiwan would mean that the United States of America believe that there are 'Two China' and not just 'One China'. China believes on the "One-China Principle". (Maizland, 2021)

It has been observed that Taiwan has become the most dangerous flashpoint in US-China relations. Taiwan is in the center of two superpowers of the world. And US will definitely use it against China. Secret diplomacy could be the best word used for China and Taiwan so far. The relations between United States of America and Taiwan have remained unofficial. US is involved in helping Taiwan improving their military. It was to make them strong against China. Both US and China are now locked in a Security Dilemma. (BBC news, 2021) In response to the unofficial relations of US and Taiwan, China will increase its military reinforcement. China still doubts the relations of US and Taiwan. There is a big question mark on United States of America in defending Taiwan against China. The defense question is still unanswered.

Research Questions?

What happens if China invades and attacks on Taiwan?

Why is Taiwan so beneficial and important for US?

On what perimeter US stands on defending Taiwan?

Theoretical Framework:

Theory of Realism

To analyze the growing war risks, conflicts and confrontation between China, US and Taiwan, theory of realism is being used. The theory of realism highlights the state interest, war, conflicts in the world politics. We can say that the nation-state is the most important actor in international relations. Organizations, individuals do exist but have a



limited power. National-interest is very important and nothing goes prior than this. The research focuses on these basics according to the theory or realism:

- US and China are continuously trying to dominate one another and increasing their capabilities by undermining the capabilities of each other.
- State-interest in most important and prior to everyone.
- China is trying to suppress everyone including US and is trying to become most dominating in the world which is triggering US and increasing the chances of War between the two.

Methodology:

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) has been used to conduct the following research. Descriptive and exploratory research approaches have been used to find out the answer of research question. As per the nature of research suggests, primary and secondary sources have been used for data collection. For data analysis, theory testing approach of QCA, Directed Content Analysis (DCA) is used. Furthermore, within DCA, manifest approach has been used.

Background:

China and Taiwan Cross-strait ties

If we go back into the history, we came to know who were the first settlers in Taiwan. They were the Austronesian tribal people and they came from the South of China (modern). After several centuries of relatively Taiwanese autonomy, Japan had a colonial rule on Taiwan in 1895 as a result of Sino-Japanese War. China got victory in the war and with the consent of UK and US, it started to rule Taiwan. (BBC news, 2021). The Qing dynasty was one of the greatest and last imperial lineage in the history of China. It ended in 1911. China was in huge dilemma (both political and social) because that imperial rule (Qing Dynasty) left China with a semi-colonial state. In this era, there were two political parties who took the responsibility of shaping modern China. The Nationalist Party (KMT) emerged as the tradition of the Republic of China (ROC), which succeeded the Qing Dynasty however ultimately capitulated to mercenary. The Nationalist Party imagined China as a safe and secure republic who is impressed by the western style of government and is following it. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), shaped in 1921, looked for a Chinese-styled Communist transformation and a future communist China maintaining the directors of Marxism-Leninism (and at last Maoism). The “Father of Democracy” was responsible for the constitutional and political changes in Taiwan and because of him, the



first non-KMT president's elections were held in Taiwan in the 2000. (BBC news , 2021). We could see better relations of China and Taiwan in 1980s. This is because of the formula put forward by China. It was known as One Country, Two Systems. (BBC news , 2021).

According to the formula, Taiwan would be given autonomy if it will unite again with China. This system was established in Hong Kong. There was not much positive response given by Taiwan as it rejected the offer but it relaxed the rules on visits as well as investments in China. In 1991, Taiwan manifested the War on People's Republic of China. (BBC news , 2021). Beijing was first distressed seeing Chen Shui-Bian as the President of Taiwan. It is because he was the man who openly demanded Independence. This happened in the year 2000. And in 2004 he was re-elected and China couldn't see that. As a response, China passed an 'Anti session Law'. A lot of agreements were made in 2008 between China and Taiwan for improving the economy. It was a way to improve the relations among the two. Talking about the Year 2016, Tsai Ing-wen was elected as the President of Taiwan and she is fully focused on getting independence from China.

US with Taiwan and China

Taiwan enjoyed enough identification as the Republic of China (ROC) throughout the Cold War and after the Year 1949 and it was also due to the US led anti - communist campaign. (CSIS, 2021). The ROC- US mutual Defense Treaty was signed in Washington in the year 1954. (Taiwan.gov.tw, 2021). In 1971, the People's Republic of China got so many votes in the UN General Assembly to eliminate Taiwan as the Republic of China, and to acknowledge PRC as the only representative of China to the UN. It was an aggressive action took by China against Taiwan. US again established contact with China in 1972 by visiting China. It has been observed that throughout the 1970s, a lot of nations established relations with PRC but the relations with Roc has remained unofficial or secret and US is one of them. In 1979, an official announcement was made which set the limits of US with Taiwan. This included: withdrawal of US forces and diplomatic recognition of US from Taiwan. (CSIS, 2021) Limitations was set on US. Stress aroused on Beijing after the chances of sales of military equipment like fighter jets to Taiwan by the United States of America. The subject of U.S. arms deals to Taiwan had stayed disrupted throughout arrangements between the two nations on setting up conciliatory relations. The 1982 dispatch tried to determine this issue so it would not hold up the further advancement of U.S.- China relations. The United States cleared that it didn't try to complete a drawn-out strategy of arms deals to Taiwan and insisted that future arms deal to the island would not go further in any term. Moreover, the U.S. pronounced its expectation to lessen bit by bit its deals of arms to Taiwan. The 1995-96 missile crises had significant ramifications for China's tactical transformation and U.S ties with Taiwan (Defense).



China began to improve its military and defense department against Taiwan to put out a political outcome which is in favor of China. (CSIS, 2021). The talks suspended by China of Taiwanese people to US again began in December 2016. It was due to the US international affairs speaking directly with phone with Tsai. (Al-jazeera, 2019) In 2017 under the Trump's command, 1.4 billion of war machines were sent to Taiwan to remind anger from Beijing. US developed law strengthening relations with Taiwan which again triggered China. The US State Department accepted the weaponry sale to Taiwan of remaining parts for F-16 fighter jets and other military airplanes which were around \$330m. China warned US that this step will put the relations between Beijing and Washington at risk. (Al-jazeera, 2019)

Current Situation

2021

The tensions haven't been reduced yet between US China and Taiwan. After seeing all these tensions, debates and competitions, some core questions arise. Like, why is Taiwan important and beneficial for US? Taiwan is the target of the major geopolitical forces of the world. Both US and China are part of a great competition no matter in terms of trade, military or technology. Taiwan is an important and beneficial object of competition between the two. Geopolitical importance, economic interests are key factors of taking interest in any country or state. But for the US, Taiwan's geopolitical importance or economy is not as much critical. Beside all this, its autonomous democracy is far more important for the US. Taiwan implements western democratic system. At the beginning, there were grass-root elections, then island-wide elections and finally democracy implemented which is still going on. US cannot be on fair terms with China as it's the rising power and giving a tough competition to US in terms of economy, geopolitics, technology etc. Also, the progress of China is automatically the loss of US. That's why it is taking interest in Taiwan and meddling in China and Taiwan affairs. US considers Taiwan as a worth-fighting object against China. US is supporting Taiwan with the trade also, as Taiwan is the 10th largest trading partner. (Zitelman, 2021). Taiwan has a unique status in the world. Also, its democratization forced US to take interest in the island. US has always been in good terms with the democracies. We find a lot of examples in the history. US considers Taiwan as the best counterpoint to the People's republic of China. Out of all the threats, US is supporting the island. This will help US in maintaining its normative standards in the world.

Another core question which holds great importance is What will Taiwan do if China invades? China has always claimed its sovereignty over the island which is 160



kilometers away from China and it won't hesitate to capture it when needed. Because of the threat some people from Taiwan want reunification as soon as possible to avoid any destruction in future while majority demands independence. Taiwanese are scared after seeing what happened to Hong Kong. In 2020, the liberation army began daily military aircraft flyover over the island. It was Chinese attempt to normalize military operations. Later on, Joe Biden made a commitment to defend Taiwan at any cost. (jennings, 2021) A lot of predictions came out in the year 2021 relating to War. Taiwan will fight back if China invades because it's not comfortable with the Chinese policies towards its states. In order to limit their strength, Taiwan has to fight back. A meeting was held between China and United states of America so that the intense relations and competition may get lower and less heightened between the two countries. The purpose the meeting was to stop China to invade in Taiwan. China is trying to invade in the military zone of Taiwan. This military zone is getting stronger because US is lending a helping hand to Taiwan against China. China seeks a lot of benefits from Taiwan including world's 21st biggest economy and high-tech sector. (jennings, 2021). Another important step was taken by the US administration which is training of Taiwanese troops. The US troops being sent to Taiwan for Taiwanese training purposes. Commoners during the interviews talked about the War and majority was not in favor of War. The common people of Taiwan said that war is not the solution and that they don't want a war like situation. Also, they said that China also don't want to fight with them and that it's just a way to scare them that's all." (jennings, 2021). Ian Easton is the senior director at the project 2049. She wrote the Chinese Invasion threat. She predicted and warned that some major disasters are on their way. Superpowers to going to be at war with each other and that the coming 10 years are the risky and sensitive ones. (Ellis, 2020)

In October 2021, the Chinese provocation in Taiwan strait prompts US and Chinese officials to discuss fraught state of bilateral affairs. (Carla Freeman & Andrew Scobell, 2021). When the meetings held in any of the homelands (either China or US), there were chances of claiming home-field advantage. To avoid any of the risks, the meeting held in Switzerland. Positive and healthy means of communication took place between both states and to stable the relations between the two. When two states work together for the mutual benefit, the outcome is always positive and so is the case with China and US. Military conflict is the tension of hour which needs to be resolved. Trade and technology are also one of the major flash points between China and US but Taiwan is most dangerous flash point among the two. China don't want to lose its hold over Taiwan at any cost. This is because if the control and hold is weakened, that means China lost control over around 1.4 billion people. Current scenario is quite sensitive. Here the noticeable point is that these tensions risen up after the new elected President of Taiwan Tsai Ing-Wen favored the independence of Taiwan. His successor didn't support the idea



much but now it has risen up again. The regional peace could be disturbed after this. China being a Communist country won't accept the liberal democracies and effective diplomacy by Tsai. That's why Beijing will try to destroy the regional peace. Although the former President Trump and Current President Biden are a lot different but they meet on a common ground which is Taiwan. First trump and now huge promises are made by Joe Biden to Taiwan. It has promised to help Taiwan strengthen its military capabilities and he would like to see Taiwan play a larger international role as well. (Carla Freeman & Andrew Scobell, 2021). The discord between the two has the potential to reshape the regional border of China. (Myers, 2021).

Supporters of China

The central American nation Nicaragua officially cut its ties with Taiwan in the favor of Beijing. It has happened recently in December 2021. As expected, China praised this decision of Nicaragua and appreciated it. Taiwan said Nicaragua has disregarded its years of friendship. (bbc news, 2021). By seeing this and as a response to China the US- State Department calls for democracies. It was done to expand engagement and corporation with Taiwan. US wants to show in every aspect that it supports Taiwan by all means. China was very pleased by the decision made by Nicaragua because it don't see Taiwan as a separate island. Beside the fact that Taiwan has its own democratically elected government and is an independent country. But China only considers it as a breakaway province from the mainland (China). According to Nicaragua, it doesn't see Taiwan as a separate independent country. Rather it sees both as Single China. (bbc news, 2021). It has denied to recognize Taiwan as a separate state. The decision made by Nicaragua has been criticized by US-State Department. According to the US-State department this decision has no importance or worth because people of Nicaragua are not in the favor of this decision and that the government is not freely elected. The spokesperson of United State has call upon all the countries to increase engagement with Taiwan and support it as much as they can. US is trying by all means in destroying the positive image of China in front of the world. The elections must be conducted fairly by the consent of people [Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's] and that the steps taken by the government aren't considering the will of people," said State Department spokesperson Ned Price. (bbc news, 2021). In the past, before Nicaragua the Pacific Island nations of Kiribati and Solomon Islands also supported China and cut diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Supporters of Taiwan

Supporters are from both sides. Hong Kong openly supports Taiwan like the US. President Joe Biden invited Taiwan to the world's largest naval exercise this week.



This was done to show the efforts by US. US is putting a lot of efforts in supporting the governed democratic island. This is a response to China which is showing aggressive behavior to Taiwan. Washington has done a commitment to island's autonomy because there is risk of conflict by Beijing and US do not want Taiwan to go under China's control at any cost. US also invited Taiwan to RIMPAC. It's the Rim of the Pacific Exercise. US allies, Japan, Australia are all the traditional and old partners but Taiwan is the new one. All these are showing support to Taiwan by seeing the increasing tensions with China. (bbc news, 2021). When China will see Taiwan involved in RIMPAC it will send a strong political signal to China. China will surely be aggressive and will take an action in response to this. It is important to train Taiwanese for any sort of War against China. It's the best opportunity to train the Taiwanese naval units, personals etc. because China could attack anytime and they should be prepared. (bbc news, 2021). By inviting Taiwan China will also create a pressure on Asian countries like Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia to refuse to participate along with the Taiwanese units.

2022

In the year 2022, Asia's leading threats will China-US relation and tension over the issue of Taiwan. (Bala, 2022). In this year 2022, the rising tensions over Taiwan is one of the biggest risks in Asia. Any move seen by Beijing by US to Taiwan will create negative impact on the state relations. The current affairs between US and China is not more than Cold War 2 type situation. (Bala, 2022). Joe Biden signed a defense bill in 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) this has further spoiled the relations between the two countries. Beijing didn't like it at all. Very harsh and rude answer was sent by Beijing. Any positive response or voluntary help to Taiwan from any country will lose any kind of relations for Beijing. China said it clearly. (Bala, 2022). The Asian countries are on very difficult ground right now. Because US and China are not on a common platform and it's difficult for any Asian state to support both at a same time. They cannot fulfill both interests at a time. Each Asian country has trade, geopolitical, economic, and technological interest with the superpowers. But how can they manage both at a time? Asian countries are not in a position to afford any kind of loss from any of the state. Because of unfair terms with US, China has shown its negative image to a lot of states coming to Olympics 2022. It's going to be very interesting this year. (Bala, 2022). US has already boycott from Beijing winter Olympics. No representation will be sent by Biden to Beijing. Still the participants will come to China but not from Biden. This year a lot of interesting events will take place between China and US on Taiwan.

The enemies of United states of America are all lined up to test Joe Biden. (Collinson, 2022). Among the enemies, China is the most fearless one. The participation of



Taiwan in National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) has forced China to take aggressive actions against Taiwan and target Taiwan. In the past week on January 15, 2022. China sent 39 warplanes into Taiwan's air defend zone. (CNN, 2022). This was one of the largest invasions by China in this year. China isn't stopping to attack Taiwan. This invasion was done in the Philippines Sea which is in the east of Taiwan. US guided missile cruisers were also a part of exercise. Chinese Communist party is not ready to accept Taiwan as a separate island from mainland China. It doesn't want to leave it free from them. This the reason it is using every tactic to get it back and make it a part of mainland China once again. The incursions are a way to tell Taiwanese that they'll make Taiwan part of their territory. Chinese government is pressurizing over the democratic island over the past few years through the warplane's attacks into Taiwan's ADIZ. (CNN, 2022)Taiwan isn't silent at this time. It issued radio warnings and took initiatives to record the activities of China. From past till now, the warplane's invasions were highest recorded and will further increase if no one will stop China.

Pandemic

Whole world faced a lot of crises during the pandemic. Some couldn't afford the vaccines because of economic crises. Vaccines are a need of every state. US played a major role in sending COVID-19 vaccines to Taiwan. It supported Taiwan a lot in tacking with the COVID. It donated 2.5 million vaccines to Taiwan. Taiwan has health partnership with US.

World War 3

In the recent times, the war has started in the European region between Russia and Ukraine. People are calling it WW3. The global attention is towards Russia and Ukraine now. China and Taiwan issue is more or less similar to Russia and Ukraine. China is seriously observing of what is happening in Ukraine. China is quite since the tensions has risen up between Russia and NATO. As China has an intention to unite with Taiwan but Taiwan is not agreeing with it. A lot of analysts says that Russian Ukraine War wont give rise to China and Taiwan War by seeing the silent behavior of China. Ukraine and Taiwan are exactly parallel in this case. China is supporting Russia in this case but is not actively participating because its dealing with the same issue. Taiwan and Ukraine have strong neighbors (hegemons) and they're itself weaker than them. Russia and Ukraine are already on War. Lets see if China breaks war because its silent and observing but no one knows what it has in mind.



Conclusion

The tensions between the superpower and the rising superpower are going on for decades. Very little positive attitude was seen between China and US. If Taiwan weren't the reason, there could be another because China and US have the sense of dominance and neither China nor US tolerates anyone above them or suppressing them for no reason. US support to Taiwan is only because China is against Taiwan and because.

Taiwan is a democratic government. Taiwan follows western democracy is one of the main reason US supports Taiwan on individual levels as well as on international forums. In this article, if we see the supporters of Taiwan, we can also see the supporters of China and they are very strong supporters. The year 2022 is going to be a very interesting year. Asia's one of the top risks in Chinese invasion in Taiwan in 2022. We can see it happening already by seeing the Chinese warplane invasion in Taiwan's ADIZ. China is portraying a very soft image in the world. It has diplomatic relations with a lot of countries like Pakistan which is providing a lot of benefits to China. These strategic relations have played and are playing a major role in increasing China's dominance all over the world. But we can what it has done and is doing with Taiwan. China has a very harsh attitude towards Taiwan by all means. The One-China Principle is of no use if it went to justice with Taiwan. In my suggestion, China should show a positive attitude towards Taiwan. US, Malaysia, Indonesia and many other countries are already in the support of Taiwan and the supporters will increase gradually. Taiwanese supporters mean enemies of China. There are risks of worldly destruction if war broke out between China and United states of America. Taiwan is between both superpowers and is one of the dangerous flash points among the two. Taiwan isn't strong enough to carry itself in war that's why a lot of people want reunification with China because they don't want any kind of destruction. Taiwan and China is a lot different when it come in terms of style of ruling and government. Taiwanese are not comfortable with the way China rules. If Taiwan becomes part of China again, people won't get along. No one will accept each other especially the democrats won't accept China's communism. Any readings and articles we find, are all same and are talking about the same issue. Either its about the government, or its about the military. Both China and Taiwan should make a decision which won't destroy the regional peace and borders. Same with China and US. Competition is a fair thing as long as it is not making any kind of destruction.



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