



RESEARCH PAPER

Analyzing the Evolution of China-Taiwan Relations: US as a Factor

¹Ayesha Atiq, ²Hafsa Zafar and ³Dr. Ghulam Mustafa*

1. M.Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
2. M.Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Associate Professor, Department of International Relations, Government College University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author: ghulammustafa@gcuf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to discuss role of US in China-Taiwan relations. According to Colonel Skinner, the resolution of the ROC dispute between PRC and the U.S. remains uncertain but possible. Given the longstanding involvement of the U.S. in this issue, it is likely to persist for many years into the future. What we are talking about here is one of the most dangerous flashpoints in the world, where there is a potential for hot war involving America and PRC. For PRC, this is an atavism from its civil war tension and Cold War past which was never resolved then but has become infinitely more urgent now. There are many people in the American who ask themselves: "Why do we have to pay so much for ROC and help her, especially since fighting over it could result in a nuclear standoff with mighty PRC?" The same, is necessary to understand what makes PRC so determined in its quest for ROC that they are willing to risk other political and economic ends. Employing a power-theory approach, this qualitative study investigated multiple sources of data: books, journals and the internet. The behavior of the United States in fact did a lot to put things where they are today menacingly poised as evidenced by military aid, ambiguous affirmation or dispute over territorial claims on PRC against ROC base upon political convenience and for the economic-cultural health linkages built. It recommends phasing out American ambiguity toward ROC in support of a more impartial American mediation approach towards the PRC-ROC issue. A true mediator is supposed to remain neutral in order to help both parties reach a peaceful solution.

KEYWORDS America, Economic-Cultural Health Linkages, Hot War, Power-Theory Approach, ROC and PRC

Introduction

America has not played a big part in the ongoing problem between PRC and ROC, which has been, and still is, an issue of global importance. This issue dates back many years. In 1949, CCP (the Chinese Communist Party) gained authority over mainland China, while the Nationalist government retreated to ROC, continuing to assert itself as the legitimate government of all of PRC. The American on the other handheld for a while the view that ROC's leadership, owing to its strong disdain for Chinese Communism, exercised official rule. It did change, however, in the 1970s. The widest point of ROC Strait is about 110 miles wide and separates ROC and PRC. Due to this geographical difference, the Conflict between PRC and ROC is commonly referred to as the Cross Strait Crisis. (Zou, 2005).

America and PRC formally established diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979, over three decades after the founding of the PRC in 1949. This process began in February 1972 with the historic visit of President Nixon to PRC which resulted in the "Shanghai

Communiqué." This document acknowledged the challenges both countries faced in recognizing each other as sovereign states and expressed a shared interest in improving their relationship. However, this was not done by the United States because after making this commitment they persisted with moves that were worsening the situation rather than improving it in an effort to rebuild relations.

The final, and we believe the most substantial obstacle to forging a détente with PRC was ROC, not Vietnam. This is the core issue: both sides believe there is only one PRC, with ROC being a part of it. 10 Each side asserts itself as the rightful government, with Taiwan officially named the Republic of China and the mainland known as the People's Republic of China.

China has criticized the United States for maintaining diplomatic ties with both Beijing and Taiwan., as this suggests support for the idea of "two PRCs" rather than a unified one. Nonetheless, the United States continues to uphold both public and covert diplomatic relations with ROC (Beeson, 2009).

The People's Republic of China urged the United States to withdraw its troops from the Republic of China but refused to pledge a non-military approach for reunifying the island with the mainland. The Chinese government looked at ROC situation as a domestic issue where only ROCese and the Chinese from the mainland were involved and called on the Americans not to interfere. A distinction should be made between the perceptions of the United States when it said in the Shanghai Communiqué that it did not have any objection to the one PRC approach, although it also stated that it does not support the section in the approach revolving around the ROC issue, read peacefully. Well, what the United States had in mind when it called for 'peaceful settlement' was an agreement which was to be effected in accordance with its terms and conditions understood and implemented by PRC as an infringement on its sovereign rights.

In 1971, despite opposition from the United States and with hopes of improving Sino-American relations, the United Nations chose to grant PRC a seat on the UN Security Council, replacing the ROC as a permanent member. This led the United States to sever diplomatic ties with ROC in 1979, officially shifting its recognition of PRC's government from Taipei to Beijing. Some Americans viewed this as a betrayal of ROC, especially when PRC later supported the "War on Terror." Soon after establishing formal relations with the PRC, the U.S. Congress enacted the "ROC Relations Act," aimed at providing ROC with similar rights to those of a sovereign nation, despite its lack of official recognition (Soong, 2018).

It emphasized the need for a rather peaceful way out to the ROC issue and pledged to provide defensive support to strengthen ROC's self-defense capabilities. This reflects the United States' vague and ambivalent stance in the PRC-ROC tension.

Some Americans and members of Congress contended that, without a commitment from the PRC to refrain from using force against ROC, the United States had a moral duty to help ROC defend itself. They also felt that maintaining the U.S. role as a peace guarantor in Asia depended on upholding this commitment. But who gave the United States this role? It appears that the United States forced it on itself for self-interest. PRC government was outraged, and rightfully so. The ROC question has been a key stumbling block in American-PRC ties.

The United States and PRC signed the Second Shanghai Communiqué in 1982. This agreement specified that the U.S. would not supply the Republic of China (ROC) with more arms than it had before 1979, nor would it provide more advanced weaponry. However, the United States did not consistently adhere to this commitment.

America's commitment to ROC aimed to promote steps toward a peaceful resolution of the ROC Crisis. However, the United States declined to specify a deadline for when it would cease providing weapons to ROC. Indeed, arms shipments to ROC have remained high, even increasing in number and quality, till 2020. Because of the United States' partial role in the PRC-ROC issue, the relationship between the two countries has been volatile and unpredictable since the 1980s.

With these ideas in mind, PRC and the American reached an agreement on numerous points:

1. Normalizing international relations benefits all countries.
2. Both nations aim to reduce the likelihood of armed war.
3. Neither should attempt to dominate the Asia-Pacific area, and both will oppose any other country or organization that does.
4. Neither side is willing to negotiate on behalf of a third party or make agreements intended to impact on other nations.

The two sides reviewed the ongoing substantial concerns between PRC and the United States. People's Republic of China focused on:

1. The ROC issue is the main obstacle to normalized relations with the United States.
2. PRC is the only legitimate government of PRC.
3. ROC is a region of PRC that should be reunified with the mainland.

The situation in ROC is a domestic concern for PRC, and foreign nations should not intervene. All military assets as well as installations of the United States must be withdrawn from ROC. PRC strongly opposes any idea of 'one PRC, one ROC,' 'two PRCs,' or 'ROC, independent,' and any assertion that the ROC issue is still an outstanding one (Wu, 1973).

America recognized that people across PRC, including ROC, believe in the concept of a single PRC, with ROC as part of it. The U.S. government does not challenge this perspective and has expressed interest in a peaceful resolution to the ROC issue that is acceptable to the Chinese people. With this in mind, the United States intends to eventually evacuate all of its military forces and bases from ROC. Meanwhile, it intends to progressively diminish its military presence there as tensions subside (Togo, 2010).

Both parties hoped that the progress made during the visit will result in improved relations between respective nations. They thought that normalizing their relationship would benefit both the Chinese and the American people while also lowering tensions in Asia and throughout the world.

1. What shared interests do the two powers acknowledge?

2. How do they deal with the ROC issue?
3. Does the American accept ROC as part of a single PRC, with the PRC government in Beijing having authority over the island?

Literature Review

Since 1949, ROC has been viewed by the PRC as a breakaway territory, with the goal of uniting it with mainland PRC. The "One PRC" approach specifies that the global entity of PRC includes one four-letter word that starts with the letter T. In line with this perspective, the PRC claims exclusive governmental authority and legitimate control over all of PRC, considering ROC an extension of the PRC (Wei, 1999).

Historically, PRC has asserted its authority over ROC, and Chiang Kai-shek asserted authority over mainland PRC and has never let go of the claim. But in 1991 Taipei decided to drop the claim for the motherland and limit ROC sovereignty only to ROC, Pengho, Quemoy and Matsu islands (Szczepanski, 2021). During this period political and social liberalization were beginning from 1988. Other concerns occurred with the "1992 Consensus," an agreement reached by the Kuomintang administration and Chinese Communist Party members. This agreement asserts that there is only "one PRC," yet it allows for differing interpretations by Beijing and ROC (Albert, 2016).

It is worth remarking that the 1992 Consensus also included a ROC's non-Independence declaration. The agreement was designed to shape future dialogue between the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and the Kuomintang. It allowed the Communist Party to assert that both the mainland and the ROC are part of a unified "one China," aiming for reunification under the "one country, two systems" approach (Wang, 2018). The DPP government of ROC, however, has denied the existence of '1992 Consensus' whatsoever. In her address in 2019 in response to the request made by the Chinese President Xi Jinping to ROC to follow the 1992 Consensus, ROC's president Tsai Ing-wen went on record and dismissed that ROC has ever formally recognized the said Consensus. She also stated that Beijing has a very own definition of consensus which includes "one PRC" and "one country, two systems" that ROC is completely against. Most ROCese people also oppose the "one country, two systems" concept, and this resistance is regarded as a compromise among ROCese addressed by Office of the President of ROC (Schubert, 2022).

Sino-ROCese relations remained unstable in mid and early 2004, after the ROC president Chen Shui-bian was re-elected. Because of his stand on independence, the PRC saw him as a threat and in an effort to counter him they passed the Anti-Secession Law in 2005. This law aimed at the prohibition of ROC's independence, the development of a peaceful reunification and to maintain stability in the ROC strait on behalf of PRC, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also talked about the possibility of the use of force to prevent ROC's statehood. People's Republic of China (PRC)'s activities raised concerns in ROC, prompting Taipei to officially reject the bill. ROC stated that the legislation breaches international law, undermines democratic progress, deteriorates ties with the mainland, and jeopardizes regional protection (Seelos, 2010).

The "One PRC" approach often means the United States' attitude towards ROC as being "strategic unknown." In 1979, the United States officially accept the identity of the government of the People's Republic of China as the legitimate governing authority of

China. As a result, President Jimmy Carter chose to withdraw official recognition of ROC, also known as the Republic of PRC (Green, 2017).

The U.S. continues an informal relationship with ROC under the Taiwan Relations Act, enacted by Congress in 1979. This treaty acknowledged solid unofficial relations with ROC and replaces the prior defense treaty which was in force from 1954 to 1979. It reinforces the United States' commitment to ROC's defense and mandates the provision of necessary defense products and services (Albert, 2016).

The United States maintains its connection with the Republic of China (ROC) through the American Institute, while the ROC operates in the U.S. via the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office. Additionally, three communiqués issued during the Nixon (1972), Carter (1979), and Reagan (1982) administrations laid the groundwork for U.S.-PRC relations (Lawrence, 2020). The third communiqué included the "Six Assurances" to the ROC, in which the U.S. promised not to set a timeline for arms deliveries, alter the Taiwan Relations Act, consult the PRC on arms sales to the ROC, mediate between the ROC and PRC, or make other policy changes. America views ROC as an essential partner in the Indo-Pacific, sharing similar values and strong economic ties. The United States supports the "One China" policy but opposes any unilateral actions by either side to alter the existing status quo. The U.S. State Department clarifies that it does not support Taiwan's independence, advocating for all issues to be settled peacefully. To uphold peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, the United States provides Taiwan with defensive support through the Taiwan Relations Act to help ensure its self-defense capabilities. Additionally, the U.S. stands ready to counter any force or coercion that could threaten ROC's protection or social and economic systems (Glaser, 2022).

The United States and Taiwan collaborate on projects in areas such as environmental, humanitarian efforts, conservation, technology, energy and regional development, bolstering U.S. influence and credibility within East Asia.

In recent years, a shifting geopolitical landscape has emerged, where the United States and the PRC navigate a world with numerous centers of influence, and both sides are skeptical and antagonistic to the other. At the same time, both countries recognize that they cannot entirely defeat one another, so they avoid outright armed war while competing in other areas. The condition is commonly referred to as a cold war.

Cold wars are known for a feature that they often become evident only in hindsight. The countries involved do not openly declare war; instead, a cold war gradually develops as both sides' activities escalate, resulting in a "peace that is not really peace." When an opponent denies that a cold war is occurring, claiming they have a "Cold War mentality" can be advantageous, as it implies their mindset affects their judgments—even if you are engaged in a similar stance yourself. Cold wars are costly and risky, yet they might be viewed as a better choice than ignoring the issue, which can lead to misconceptions and errors. For a society like the United States, which relies on the consent of its citizens, it is critical to recognize this problem and reach wide consensus on goals. Ignoring the problem may seem simpler, but it might result in instability and mistakes, which is not a responsible attitude (Brown, 2023).

Increasing military tensions in the Taiwan Strait and demands for reunification with Taiwan have raised questions about the United States' commitment. China's growing military advantage over Taiwan is a concern for the U.S., which does not acknowledge Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan. To protect its interests and uphold

regional stability, the United States must seek effective ways to manage this tension. PRC reacts to its neighbors through its "One PRC Policy" and in 1979 United States cut all the diplomatic relations with ROC because of it. After that, the United States has maintained a approach of deliberate ambiguity, supporting ROC indirectly, politically, militarily and through arms supply. Before the Trump administration, America maintained low profile with ROC's support, mostly to not upset PRC. Nevertheless, both Trump and Biden governments have taken hard- line approaches endorsing ROC, increasing tensions with PRC.

What attracted the attention of PRC in 2016 is a substantial change in the political system in ROC. Before President Tsai took office, PRC's pressure on ROC was already high, it restricted Taiwan's involvement in international organizations and similar entities. This study compares and contrast ROC and PRC and their ally, United States of America. Interviews combined with official government documents, online resources and articles were also adopted to gather information concerning ROCese people of different age. They reveal that majority of people would like to maintain the status quo with PRC. However, what is considered and of independence or unification has reversed depending on how much the U.S. is willing to help ROC or how threatened people feel by PRC. Public opinion in ROC is also divided by political party: KMT party members yearn for better relations with PRC; the DPP prefers to seek other opportunities and does not need PRC. This division will keep affecting government approach and ROC's future. Since being removed from the United Nations, ROC has had limited involvement in international politics. Public opinion will keep influencing ROC's leaders in both domestic and foreign matters. The research suggests ways ROC can improve its position in the international arena (Liao, 2022).

Material and Methods

The research which forms the basis of this paper is secondary research data which has been compiled from periodicals such as journals, newspapers, books and others.

The study is contextual, with a center on examining factual material and insights gained by past writers on the subject. It employs a qualitative technique, which is often utilized to extract insights from various sources, such as documents, books, journals, and newspapers. This technique provides for a more in-depth grasp of the topic matter by drawing on established literature and public conversation.

Historical Background

Earlier in 2004 tension arose across the Taiwan Strait but at the moment the relationship between the two regions has seemed to normalize. Taiwan's margin to push for its secession from China will remain restricted until Chen Shui-bian's presidency comes to an end in 2008. These are due to a firmer opposition from Taiwan and activities by China that have found some sympathy in the Island therefore less pressure for secession. Above all, there are indications that the United States may be willing and able to ensure that neither Chinese aggression against Taiwan nor steep pressures that would push Taiwan beyond the current range of acceptable change will occur (Strait IV, 2004).

Chen and his government promoted pro-Independence confrontation between late 2003 and late 2004 based on electoral, values, and legacy concerns. Chen continued to seek independence even though Beijing became more worried about war, increased diplomatic pressure, and positive trade and economic relations. His political opponents

were forced to revert to the defensive, and businesspeople, no matter how great their stake in China, could not rid themselves of caution. Fearing that Chen may destabilize Taiwan-China relations the US sought to dissuade Chen from supporting the independence movement through public and private statements (Sutter, 1998; Yaseen, et. al., 2023).

Washington's actions were generally considered as exerting the political pressure regarding the change of the Taiwan's government and population perspectives before the parliamentary elections in December 2004, which was the severe defeat of President Chen and his administration. Earlier in April and May 2005, leaders of the opposition parties in Taiwan and Chinese leaders sat down in Beijing. The favorable effect created by these negotiations, along with the expectations of increased trade and cooperation, helped to mitigate the negative response to China's adoption in March of an anti-cession law which said that China would militarily retaliate if Taiwan sought to become a permanent separate country. Taiwan's politics are still polarized when it comes to issues to do with china. Chen Shui-bian and his pro-green camp are reluctant to follow three opposition leaders, who have given up Taiwan's independence and accepted Beijing's "One China" principle, which is necessary to improve relations with China. One of the aspects for which the Americans insist that both Taipei and Beijing change in interactions is to become more conciliatory.

Little is known how much Taiwan and China will be able to de-escalate this conflict and find common grounds in the next years. President Chen is still quite vociferously pro-independence, and he gets encouragement from his Democratic Progressive Party's better performance in the May-2005. National pride and consciousness limit the Chinese leadership's ability to make moves towards rapprochement with Chen. People enjoy talking to one another, but the country is not willing to make substantial efforts to talk or find a solution over issues that may arise between them. The threats that incumbents of all three administrations face mean that none of them can afford to alter present policy fundamentally. However, some minor activities like increase in the level of commercial and personal interactions between Taiwan and China, may help to make the situation better, decrease the tension and even have the chances to restore the diplomatic talks, while the area can remain rather volatile.

The Crisis Group reported its last two publications on Taiwan-China relations in February 2004. At the time, as in previous reports, we pointed out that the "One China" formula which maintained the region stable for 30 years was no longer viable. Thus, much as the probability for an armed clash was slim, the likelihood was not impossible. We suggested numerous both the short- and medium-term strategies for internationally supervised peace keeping as well as how the process of reintegration, which might lead towards the formation of a long-term peace, may be brought about at some distant point in the future (Johnston, 2016).

Conclusion

But till today, China and Taiwan are the worst enemies especially the staking of independence by Taiwan and China's 'one China' policy. Whereas UAE has tried soft measures to cool a hot line while IR has turned symbols of friendship into channels of conflict to ensure that each side gets something, tangible, and substantive it needs from the other in the near to medium term, the political stakes for the incumbent governments of the two countries are high, it could not be possible to have appreciable progress. Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan's President is trying to amalgamate a more pro independent Taiwan

while PRC leadership cannot do the same because of the constraints of nationalism which forbids the action almost entirely.

Regarding relations between China and Taiwan, the United States has engaged itself in supporting dialogue, insisting on the peace and stability. Although America champions diplomacy it does not take the extra step to actively facilitate diplomacy and generate solutions to inter and intra-state conflicts. The U.S endeavours not to cause enmity or incite violence and keep the region secure but the path to achieving prolonged stability and enduring peace is still apparent. Currently, the risks facing Taiwan, China and America all make it improbable that any side will undertake any aggressive measures to dynamically change present policy.

References

- Albert, E. (2016). *China-Taiwan Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 7.
- Beeson, M. (2009). Geopolitics and the making of regions: The fall and rise of East Asia. *Political Studies*, 57(3), 498-516.
- Brown, M. (2023). Taiwan's urgent task: A radical new strategy to keep China away. *Foreign Affairs*, 25.
- Cheng, Y. (2020). Public opinion and Taiwan's foreign policy: The influence of U.S. relations. *Asian Survey*, 60(3), 501-526.
- Fravel, M. T. (2019). The United States and Taiwan's defense: Analyzing the impact of arms sales. *The China Quarterly*, 238, 458-481.
- Glaser, B. S., Bush, R. C., & Green, M. J. (2022). *Toward a stronger US-Taiwan relationship*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- Green, M. J., & Glaser, B. S. (2017). What is the US "One China" policy, and why does it matter? *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 13.
- Johnston, A. I. (2016). The evolution of interstate security crisis-management theory and practice in China. *Naval War College Review*, 69(1), 28-71.
- Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China (Shanghai Communiqué). (1972).
- Lawrence, S. V. (2020). President Reagan's six assurances to Taiwan. Congressional Research Service.
- Liao, W.-L., & Rola, A. C. C. (2022). Taiwanese perceptions of China, Taiwan, and US relations from 2016 to 2021. *Journal of Public Affairs and Development*, 9(1), 6.
- Schubert, G., & Lee, C.-y. (2022). Taiwan during the first administration of Tsai Ing-Wen.
- Seelos, B. (2010). The Anti-Secession Law and the use of threat: Is China's policy towards Taiwan a violation of Art 2 (4) UN Charter? *Diplom. de*.
- Soong, H.-w. (2018). US strategy of "A Free and Open Indo-Pacific": A perspective of Taiwan. *Prospect Journal*, 19, 9-28.
- Strait IV, T. (2004). *How an Ultimate Political Settlement Might Look*. International Crisis Group Asia Report
- Sutter, R. G. (1998). *US policy toward China: an introduction to the role of interest groups*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Szczepanski, K. (2021). *Taiwan: Facts and history*. ThoughtCo.
- Tanaka, K., & Chou, E. (1972). Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, 29.

- Togo, K. (2010). Joint Communiqué of the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China. In *Japan's Foreign Policy, 1945-2009* (pp. 450-451). Brill.
- Wang, A., & Wu, C. K. S. (2018, 10 November). What does the 1992 consensus mean to citizens in Taiwan? *The Diplomat*.
- Wei, S. (1999). Some reflections on the One-China principle. *Fordham International Law Journal*, 23, 1169.
- Wu, P. P. (1973). *Communist China in the United Nations*. University of Wyoming.
- Yaseen, Z., Muzaffar, M. & Shahbaz, K. (2023). The Conundrum of Taiwan Issue: Implications on World Politics, *Asian Journal of International Peace and Security (AJIPS)*, 7(3), 23-33
- Zou, K. (2005). Governing the Taiwan issue in accordance with law: An essay on China's anti-secession law. *Chinese Journal of International Law*, 4(2), 455-463.