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US' Taiwan Strategy: An Instrument to Contain China

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US' TAIWAN STRATEGY: AN INSTRUMENT TO CONTAIN CHINA

Muhammad Farooq*

Abstract

The issue of Taiwan has become a major point of contention between the US and China, with visits by US officials resulting in strong criticism from China and military escalation in the region. Experts are concerned that a conflict between these two powers in the Asia-Pacific region could endanger global peace and stability, especially given the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. China maintains its claim over Taiwan under the 'One China Policy,' considering it a lost province and advocating for its unification with the mainland. While recognising Taiwan as part of China under this policy, the US engages in diplomatic and military activities with Taiwan, which China considers interference in its internal affairs. In the post-Cold War era, the US adopted an ambiguous policy towards Taiwan as part of its containment strategy against China. Therefore, the US seeks to slow China's perpetual growth by promising enhanced defence for Taiwan. Recent US official visits to Taiwan reflect provocative measures in line with this strategy. This paper analyses the US' Taiwan policy as a containment instrument against China, recent measures adopted by the US administration to provoke China, Taiwan's strategic significance, and the US' long-standing commitment to Taiwan's security as essential for maintaining its leadership role in international affairs.

Keywords: Taiwan, China, Containment Strategy, One China Policy, Cross-Strait Crisis.

Introduction

The successful strategy of indirect military confrontation and containment of the Soviet Union remained relevant for the US' future strategic orientation. With its emergence as the unchecked global power, the US focused on preserving its hegemony and preventing competitors' rise. In March 1992, the US leaked its initial draft of Defence Planning Guidance (DPG), which pledged to contest and preventing the rise of great power rivals and deny a global role to any emerging power.¹ To this end, containment, the use of economic and military force and patronage of democracy worldwide became instrumental. Today, China's accelerated growth rate as a rigorous market economy, military advancement and technological sophistication has become a severe threat to the US, which, if not checked, would challenge US supremacy by 2030.²

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During the 1980-90s, China's annual growth rate touched 10% compared to the US, which remained around 3-4%. Consolidating its economic gains, China turned to regional integration through Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In addition, China-Russia collaboration at regional and international levels based on their shared strategic interests has challenged US influence and undermined its vital interests.³ China has been firm in its resolve to become a regional power in Asia and secure its security and economic interests. The US involvement in regional affairs was declined at the conference on interaction and confidence building measures (CBMs) in early 2014 that Asia's problems and security issues must be protected and ultimately resolved by Asians. The Asia-Pacific region has emerged as the most significant economic and military zone, and the power relationship between the US and China primarily shapes its regional politics and stability. China's rising military and economic clout in the region would threaten the US interests and security of its allies in East Asia and Asia-Pacific. China's economic and military advancement would change its diplomatic behaviour towards reshaping the world order and regional politics of the South China Sea, which would not be acceptable to the US.

To maintain its regional influence and deny the China-Russia alliance, the US recognised China as a rising power and initiated an engagement and containment strategy to secure its strategic interests. Initially, the US improved its bilateral engagement with China through enhanced diplomatic and trade collaboration. It established diplomatic relations with China in 1979 and acknowledged the One China Policy to defuse tense relations. The US expected fast social and cultural changes in Chinese society through intense involvement with the global community, economic markets and multilateral forums. Having failed in its policy, the US unveiled its containment strategy based on hybrid warfare, disinformation campaign, trade war, alignment of friendly countries and use of hard military power or proxy war. The containment policy was conceived as an instrument of victory, not a defensive strategy against adversaries. Its practical manifestation is again visible in the recent Russia-Ukraine war in which Russia faces a unified US-led Western front.

The US consistently exploits China's weaknesses to undermine its economic growth and military advancement. In its containment strategy, Taiwan has surfaced as the most significant island due to its proximity to China and the geostrategic location at the junction of the East and South China Seas. Taiwan aspires to be independent; however, it does not declare independence due to China's claims over the island and fear of military confrontation. China claims Taiwan as its legitimate part, and a 'break away' province based on the legacy of its past and aspires to its accession through peaceful means. To secure people's inclination and support for unification, China frequently affects the island's internal affairs, carries out hacking and disinformation campaigns, undertakes economic pressure and diplomatic isolation, and supports pro-China political entities to further its strategic interests. China's accelerated economic growth has always been a powerful instrument of soft power against Taiwan.⁴ China also reiterates on 'one country-two systems' policy announcing maximum autonomy for Taiwan, which Taiwan has rejected. Amid China's military ascendancy and strict

measures, Taiwan has become more deeply engaged with the US, seeking its survival support and avoiding China's forceful annexation.

Due to its strategic location, Taiwan has emerged as a pivot to the 'first island chain' – a US concept to contain the spread of communism and a strategic instrument in the US strategic plans in the Asia-Pacific. Militarily, Taiwan is instrumental in restricting China's access to the region's resources, global energy corridors and significant forums. Initially, the US adopted an ambiguous policy towards Taiwan–China crisis. It emphasised peaceful settlement of the issue through comprehensive dialogue, urged Taiwan not to declare independence unilaterally and asserted China not to use force for conflict resolution. Despite acknowledging the 'One China Policy' and its commitment to renew bilateral engagement with China, the US did not abandon Taiwan and maintained unofficial economic, diplomatic and security relations with the island. Now, it intends to strengthen Taiwan's defence and continues influencing its policies by supplying arms and advanced weapons.

The clash of strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific has converted the US-China bilateral engagement into a trade war, economic competition and strategic cold war. Taiwan's issue has become a strategic flashpoint for regional stability, and each side is engulfed in action-reaction. Both rivals have initiated a well-orchestrated disinformation campaign against each other which further severed bilateral ties. The US has alleged China for spreading COVID-19, human rights violations in the far-West province of Xinjiang, territorial disputes with India, issues with Tibet, strategic partnership with Russia and employing coercive means against Taiwan, resulting in cross-Strait instability. The targeted objective of the US is to coerce China to submit to its terms and influence its relations with surrounding states. The US intent in backing Taiwan against China is viewed as a strategy to lure it into a proxy war. The recent visit by the US Speaker of the House to Taiwan is also part of the US provocative measures, which has stirred a cross-Strait crisis in the region leading to escalation by the stakeholders.

This paper, therefore, argues that the Taiwan issue is instrumental in US strategic orientation against China's accelerated economic growth, which provokes China to shift its focus from economic cooperation to military confrontation. It also emphasises that as a proxy of the US, Taiwan would serve its interests of intimidating China and limiting its accelerated growth rate, allowing the US to maintain its supremacy in the Asia-Pacific. The current impasse in the Taiwan Strait has become a flashpoint for the world's future peace as it has become the most sensitive issue between the US and its rising challenger China.

Cross-Strait Crisis – Historical Background

Formerly known as 'Formosa', Taiwan is a small island off the east coast of China and is located in East Asia between the Philippines and Japan. The Taiwan Strait separates it from China and lies at the junction of the East and South China Seas in the

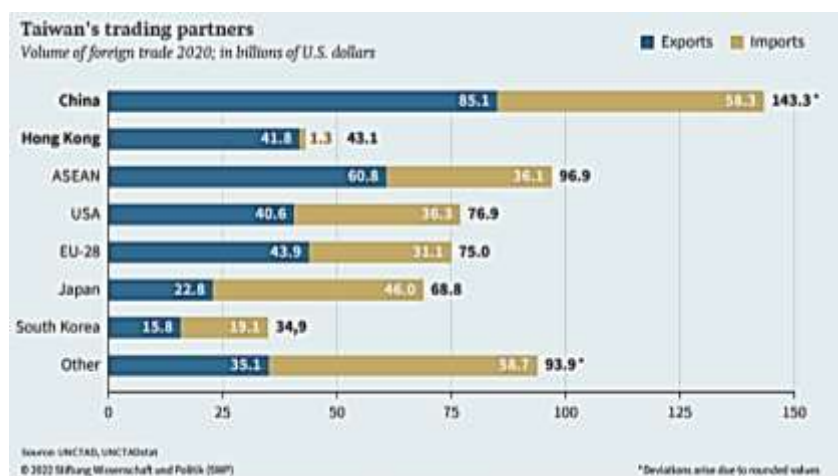
northwestern Pacific Ocean. Its geographical significance gives it a unique and central position in the first island chain – a string of pro-US island nations and territories, including Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.⁵ Taiwan is home to 23 million people, and though its international status is contested, it exercises autonomous sovereignty over its territory, including the islands of Taiwan, Penghu, Matsu and Kinmen.

Historically, China declared Taiwan its legitimate part after the defeat of occupant Japan in World War II. The claim was further reinforced in 1949 when the nationalist Chinese, i.e., the Kuomintang (KMT), settled on the island after their defeat at the hands of communists during the Chinese civil war and assumed to be the Republic of China (ROC).⁶ The ideological differences between PRC and ROC aggravated claims over each other's territorial regions. Each side claimed to be the legitimate representative of all Chinese living astride Taiwan Strait hence interpreting the One China Policy to their favour.⁷ China stressed the reunification of Taiwan being the remnant of the past and a relic of the cold war, whereas Taiwan (ROC) aspired to promote democracy and proclaim independence. Cross-Strait tension accelerated with the transition of Taiwan from authoritarian rule to democracy in 1986 and the holding of the first free elections during the 1990s.⁸

Till 2016, the 1992-census formed the basis of China-Taiwan relations, which remained cordial under the KMT government. Both countries signed the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement in 2010 to enhance bilateral trade and address issues from time to time.⁹ Due to their proximity, their economies remained interdependent, and trade volume increased exponentially. China has always been inspiring Taiwanese people through different incentives, economic and academic concessions. Students, the business community and tourists from Taiwan are extended various incentives and exemptions, including tax amenities, visa relaxation and ease of establishing businesses. China has also pledged to seek unification of the island through dialogue and peaceful means without military power. However, in 2016, the newly elected nationalist President, Tsai Ing-wen, switched his orientation to the US. The 1992-census, therefore, lost its relevance on the island with rising slogans of independence. Increasing US-Taiwan engagement with enhanced security cooperation, mutual defence pact, and exchange of high officials' visits have raised Chinese suspicion about their future discourse. China has resorted to securing its strategic and economic interests, including suspending communication mechanisms in cross-Strait, tourism and trade.¹⁰ On the other hand, the Taiwanese's aspiration for independence and sovereign identity has been further reinforced by rising democratic values, industrial development, economic stability, deepened US-Taiwan relations and consistent Chinese coercive strategy. According to a survey conducted in 2019, more than 66% of Taiwanese desire independence. However, Taiwan has refrained from announcing autonomous status under the intimidating Chinese strategy and the threat of using force.

With consistent economic reforms, Taiwan has become a leading economy and is famous for its global supply chain of semiconductors. Since 2016, Taiwan has adopted a policy to reduce dependence on China and increase bilateral engagement with southern and southeast countries, Australia and New Zealand. It has also developed relations with Japan, the US, ASEAN countries, India and many others in the Asia-Pacific region. Despite cross-Strait escalation, China has remained Taiwan's biggest export partner, with an export value of \$515 billion from 2017 to 2022, more than the US. Taiwan's economy grew at an accelerated pace of 3.0% in 2019, with another projected growth of 2.5% in the pandemic year of 2020. Due to Taiwan's increasing economic ranking and leading capacity of manufacturing semiconductors, it has attracted the focus of both the US and China.

Figure 1: Taiwan's Trading Partners



(Source: UNCTADstat)

China's Taiwan Orientation

China's attachment to Taiwan is based on security, economy and historical grounds. Historically, Taiwan is considered the lost piece of imperialism, and its accession would end the old legacy of the century of humiliation and help regain the lost honour. China constantly reiterates that the One China Policy and its relations with Taiwan are based on mutual respect for the census of 1992, a tacit understanding between Beijing and the former Taiwanese government. China's foreign office always declares Taiwan as part of China, and its return as part of the 'arc of history' and its efforts for independence with the support of the US is considered a 'red line' for China.

Due to its proximity to China and geostrategic location in the western Asia-Pacific region, Taiwan is significant for security and economic reasons. Its control would allow China to access the global energy corridors, project economic influence beyond the First Island Chain and dominate trade routes in the Asia-Pacific. The

economic potential of Taiwan would enhance the economic growth of China after absorbing the semiconductor manufacturing market of Taiwan, which would enable it to surpass the US even before the expected timeframe. The combined economic potential would allow China to use it as an economic instrument, undermining the security and economic interests of the US.

Taiwan provides China with the capacity to protect its vital interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Its close defence relations with the US and its allies are considered a threat to regional stability; therefore, the strategy of China is usually employed to deter Taiwan from becoming a base for Western forces. China fears that including Taiwan in NATO would create a security threat to China, thereby realigning its focus from the economy to security aspects. Its future behaviour would reshape the security environment of Asia-Pacific and define China's maritime orientation towards the US and its allies, including Japan, the Philippines and South Korea, in any conflict.

China has resorted to a strategy to force the Taiwan government to acknowledge the interpretation of the 'One China Policy' and avoid membership in NATO and a strategic relationship with the US against Chinese interests. Under this strategy, China has suspended official and unofficial cross-Strait's communication with Taiwan and dropped incentives and concessions extended to students, tourists and the business community. Taiwan has been denied diplomatic engagement with other states and membership in global forums and institutions apart from military measures adopted frequently in the cross-Straits. Trade relations have also been downplayed, and imports and exports have reduced considerably. The governing machinery is disrupted through regular cyber-attacks and the interruption of the official websites of Taiwan. China also pursues other states to cut diplomatic and trade ties with the island and urges global corporations, including airlines and hotel chains, to list Taiwan as a Chinese province.

Due to China's consistent opposition to Taiwan's independent status, it could not become a member of the UN and other global forums. However, Taiwan holds member status in more than forty organisations, most of them regional, such as the Asian Development Bank and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, as well as in the World Trade Organization. It holds observer or other status on several other bodies. Only fourteen states maintain official diplomatic ties with Taiwan. At present, only 13 countries located in Central America and the Caribbean have recognised Taiwan as an independent country.¹¹ Due to China's strong position on the issue, no government has ever simultaneously maintained formal diplomatic ties with both China and Taiwan.

In 2019, President Xi reiterated China's proposal of one country, two systems, under which Taiwan would be granted a high degree of autonomy and preserve its political and economic identity. China has also stated to resolutely defeat any attempt to separate Taiwan from China. China's handling of Hong Kong has lowered the credibility of China's one-country, two-system policy regarding Taiwan, which does not believe in China's commitments to the island.¹² With US interference and backing,

Taiwan has initiated new relations with other countries and reduced its dependence on China.

US' Taiwan Strategy

Taiwan has become instrumental in the US grand strategy to contain China's growing influence due to its important geostrategic and geoeconomic position. Taiwan's geostrategic significance was realised during the Korean War (1950) when it became a major node point and a pivotal US military base for its strategic interests in East Asia. The US signed a formal defence pact with Taiwan during the 1950s to protect it against China's intimidation and coercive policy.¹³ Taiwan was included in the US-led collective security system in East Asia in 1954, facilitating the establishment of US military bases to project its power. Taiwan formed part of the First Island Chain in the 1940s, as the first line of defence for US interests. Bashi Channel and the Miyako Strait are located astride this chain which are critical chokepoints for China's maritime interests and economic ambitions. Due to China's claims over the island, US strategic relations with Taiwan antagonised China, considering its interference in its internal affairs and violation of international norms resulted in severed ties between the US and China. During the 1950s, the US threatened to use nuclear weapons in response to China's impending threats to two Taiwan-controlled small islands, making it a flashpoint for global stability.

The US improved its relations with China after the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and sought China's support to disentangle Vietnam. On February 8, 1972, both powers signed the Shanghai Communique, under which the US acknowledged the One China Policy and Taiwan as a legitimate part of China.¹⁴ On December 15, 1978, the US established diplomatic relations with China while revoking its official bilateral ties with Taiwan. The US terminated its military presence on the island and abandoned the defence treaty. The US urged China and Taiwan to engage in comprehensive bilateral dialogue for conflict resolution and adherence to global norms for not using military means. The US also urged Taiwan not to declare independence unilaterally until stakeholders develop a consensus.¹⁵

Despite its commitment, the US pursued an ambiguous policy for cross-Strait relations. Covertly, it maintained cultural, commercial and unofficial diplomatic and security ties with Taiwan and consistently supported Taiwan in strengthening its defence against China. The relations were brought under a legal framework through the Taiwan Relations Act in April 1979, which assured defence cooperation with the island. On July 14 1982, Taiwan was assured about continuous arms sales, mutual security, non-revision of the Taiwan Relations Act and no forceful accession to China. During the Taiwan Policy Review in 1994, the US allowed an exchange of mutual visits with Taiwan and enhanced economic and military cooperation with Taiwan. In 1995, extending the visa to the President of Taiwan marked a shift in US policy from engagement to containment, leading to China's criticism. In 1996, the situation escalated in the Taiwan Strait due to a military show-off by China and the deployment

of a US aircraft carrier, leading to a confrontation. The US changed its orientation from arms sales to Taiwan's defence, further escalating the situation. Thus the policy of ambiguity of the US had changed into a clear strategy of defending US interests in the region through Taiwan's defence. All these policies and initiatives were considered part of the US provocative strategy to contain China and limit its influence in the region.

Figure 2: Island Chains in the Pacific



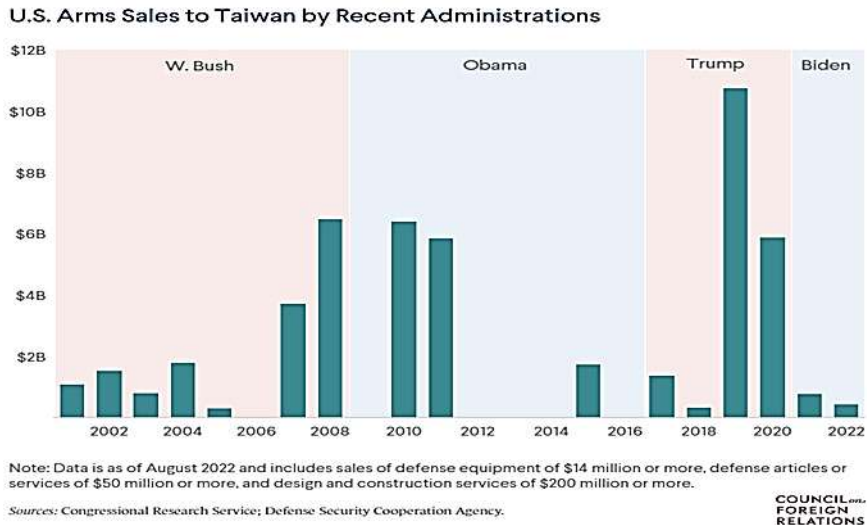
(Source: JDC)

The long-standing US commitment to defend Taiwan is a base of credibility for its allies, i.e., Japan and the Philippines. Taiwan's abandonment would severely jeopardise the US' standing and undermine its strategic interests. Allowing China to manage Taiwan would also encourage China to secure its interests and reshape the regional environment. It would allow China to use the island as a forward military base for monitoring and regulating trade routes in Asia-Pacific, thereby switching the balance of power in favour of China. On the contrary, under US influence, Taiwan would allow the US to utilise it as a place of leverage for countering China's expansionist plans. It hence would achieve a position to secure its interests in the South China Sea and Asia-Pacific region. It would help US allies to remain engaged with the US without compromising on their interests.

The continuity of Taiwan's economy has become essential for US economic health. The island is the ninth largest trade partner of the US, and its expertise in telecommunication, chip market and computer technology would ensure global advancement. Moreover, its control by China would strengthen the Chinese economy, already challenging US interests. The US has reinforced its bilateral engagement with Taiwan through people-to-people contacts to benefit from Taiwan's economic development and achieve moral support for its agenda. With the transition of Taiwan into democracy, the scope of engagement has been further enhanced, creating hope for a secure future for the people of Taiwan.

The US has maintained strategic ambiguity regarding Taiwan's security. Though the US has been treating Taiwan as a major non-NATO ally since 2003, the US has not stated how it would support Taiwan in case of invasion by China. Taiwan has not become a formal ally of the US under NATO. The Taiwan Relations Act states that the US would support Taiwan in maintaining its defence and through its bases in case of an attack on its sovereignty. The US is by far the largest arms exporter to Taiwan, providing all defence equipment.

Figure 3: US Arms Sales to Taiwan



(Source: Council on Foreign Relations)

It also supports the Taiwan government for independence but urges only to take unilateral decisions with a consensus of stakeholders and to develop a favourable environment. Due to China's criticism, the US has been endeavouring to seek membership of Taiwan in different global economic forums, thereby allowing Taiwan to economically engage with the world and pursue its interest in independence. Engagement with multilateral institutions would reduce Taiwan's interdependence with China and accelerate its economic pace, which would undermine China's economic growth. Moreover, it would also reduce Taiwan's dependence on China for diplomatic and economic gains extending more avenues to Taiwan for progression.

US Provocative Strategy

In December 2017, President Donald Trump announced China as a strategic competitor that would challenge US interests and its strategic infrastructure.¹⁶ This declaration accelerated US provocative strategy against China in the cross-Straits. The objectives of this strategy could be prompting China through constant irritants to invade Taiwan, allowing the US to impose sanctions against China, limit its economic

growth, present a unified Western front, mobilise the UN for legislation against China and indirectly facilitating annihilation of China through punitive measures.

Under the Taiwan Travel Act-2018, the US has relaxed its policy of interacting with the island's people. Under this policy, President Joe Biden invited the President of Taiwan to his inaugural ceremony against China's protest. The US administration has also backed Taiwan's membership in the global forums, which do not require the state's identity. It would enhance other member states to acknowledge Taiwan's independence whenever it is announced. In October 2021, President Joe Biden explicitly stated that Taiwan's defence is part of its strategy and alliance commitment. The US military and academic institutions have extended admissions to the Taiwanese for training and educational purposes. The US observers have participated in Taiwan's military exercises. Although the US has not officially joined military exercises and drills, different media groups and reporters reported the presence of US special forces in Taiwan in October 2021. On October 1, 2021, during the 72nd anniversary celebrations of the PRC, China flew over 100 fighter jets into Taiwan's air defence identification zone in response to US provocations.

The US has unleashed a well-orchestrated disinformation campaign against China over its policy against Taiwan. US media houses and analysts regularly predict that China will use military means to control the island by 2049. A similarity has been drawn between Russia-Ukraine and China-Taiwan with the conclusion that Russia's aggression might forcefully embolden China to annex Taiwan. Before Russia invaded Ukraine, The Economist ran a cover story in May 2021 describing Taiwan as "the most dangerous place on earth."¹⁷ Former INDOPACOM Commander Phil Davidson made headlines, for example, when he predicted in congressional testimony in 2021 that the threat of a PRC invasion of Taiwan could be "manifest during this decade, in fact in the next six years."¹⁸

The recent US administrations have maintained more subtle policies towards the issue. With the opening of a new defacto embassy building in Taiwan, the relations have further been strengthened. Recent developments have accelerated the bilateral engagement between the two governments. President Biden's invitation to the Taiwanese representative to the presidential inauguration reflects changing orientation of the US. The joint military training with Taiwan and naval movement in the Taiwan Strait reinforce the US commitment to defend the region against China. Under Taiwan Policy Act-2022, the US Congress has proposed legislation to extend membership of NATO to Taiwan as a major non-NATO ally.¹⁹ The legislation has rapidly shifted from an ambiguous US policy to a clearly defined orientation of maintaining assertiveness in the Western Pacific Ocean. The Act promotes Taiwan's security, deterring China from hostile action in the region. Under this legislation, the US will provide almost \$4.5 billion for security enhancement, declaring Taiwan a major non-NATO ally and earning membership in multilateral forums for Taiwan, further bolstering bilateral engagement in the defence and economic domain.²⁰ The ex-officials of NATO have also visited Taiwan to support it for democracy, freedom and

the right to declare independence.²¹ The Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi's recent visit to Taiwan has stirred the cross-strait environment and disturbed the region's diplomatic balance. The visit of a US high official to Taiwan is termed interference in China's internal affairs.²²

Future of the Taiwan Crisis

Due to its economic ascendancy and geostrategic location, Taiwan has emerged as a significant power source for China and the US. Management of the technologically advanced island would change the balance of power in favour of the controlling power. Despite its historical, economic and security linkage with Taiwan, China has always preferred peaceful settlement despite adopting a stern position. Its coercive means are only a reaction to the provocative actions taken by the US in cross-straits which are considered interference and violation of China's sovereignty. China never gave a timeline for the forceful occupation of the island nor consented to initiate an open confrontation. Despite US' presence in the cross-straits, China avoided interdiction of US forces, reflecting its assertion for peace and stability. Disregarding US provocations, China is focused on upgrading its economic and technological growth and enhancing its diplomatic influence and collaboration with different regions. China's tolerance and wait-and-see policy have forestalled the rise of conflict and crisis in the region. Due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, its commitment and resolve to settle the issue peacefully has not changed.

China will continue opposing US-Taiwan engagement and follow its policy against Taiwan. To avoid punitive measures and sanctions regime under the US, China would patronise pro-China Taiwan political entities to rise to power and influence public sentiment in favour of China for unification. Through economic intimidation and extending incentives for the island's people, China would enhance its interdependence with Taiwan to secure its interests. China would increase its economic relations with Taiwan and make it a stakeholder in the cross-strait security mechanism. On the other hand, Taiwan is equally important for the US to secure its interests in the Asia-Pacific region. US and Taiwan favour independent Taiwan based on the survey of 2019. In case of failure of its containment strategy, the US is likely to prompt Taiwan to declare independence provoking China to invade Taiwan and providing an avenue for the US to manoeuvre against China. Through a unified Western front, China would be isolated diplomatically, drag its economic growth and ban its imports and exports. President Joe Biden has pledged to interfere in the regional confrontation if China invades Taiwan. The US has already embarked on its military presence in the Asia-Pacific and the cross-straits and has increased its military activities on the island in collaboration with Taiwan.

Cross-strait crisis and tension are growing every day, and NATO has declared the Chinese actions provocative and threatening to the US interests and Western objectives. On the contrary, China has alleged the US government for provoking China through direct involvement in the Chinese region of influence and contesting its

strategic and security interests. The recent military show-off in the cross-Straits has endangered regional peace and stability. Any accidental fire, damage and aggression from either side would lead to a large-scale confrontation. Both China and the US have been pursuing the policy of deterrence and escalation to secure their interests, disregarding the option of mutual reassurance.²³ China feels more confident about flexing its muscle, while Taiwan has gone more inclined towards the West and the US. The US always portray that it shares values of democracy with Taiwan, similar nature of the rule of law and respect for human rights, which are the basis of their relations and engagement.²⁴ Therefore, the peaceful settlement of the crisis has become difficult.

Conclusion

The US and other Western countries have strengthened Taiwan's military capabilities to counter China's growing technology and military power. The deployment of US forces in the Asia-Pacific region is a deterrent to China's potential invasion of Taiwan. Preventing military intimidation and coercion is crucial, as it could lead to a major crisis and endanger global peace and prosperity. The cross-Straits conflict and the changing military posture of all parties involved require international peace-making efforts to ensure regional stability and prevent a worldwide conflict. An armed conflict in the Taiwan Strait would have severe economic and security implications worldwide. It is essential to manage conflicts carefully and to avoid escalation.

A conflict between China and Taiwan would also threaten global food and energy security and economic interests. China's economy and technological advancements heavily rely on Taiwan's semiconductor industry, which could be jeopardised during the war. Therefore, the invasion and occupation of Taiwan would result in a decline in China's influence in the region and possible international sanctions. It is, therefore, crucial for both China and the US to avoid provocative measures and build trust for conflict resolution. Both parties must share the objective of maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The US should clarify its policy towards the One China principle, while China should assure the world of peaceful settlement and avoid coercive measures. Taiwan must maintain the status quo and avoid declaring independence unilaterally.

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