

A Realism Analysis of the Impact of the Taiwan Strait Crisis Induced by Pelosi's Visit to Taiwan from the Perspective of Realist Theory

Tiange Wang*

School of Cultural Industries and Tourism, Xiamen University of Technology, Xiamen, Fujian,
361021, China

*1910407118@s.xumt.edu.com

Abstract. The US-China relationship has always been an important part of international relations, and Taiwan is a central issue in the relationship between the two countries. 2022 The visit of Nancy Patricia, the President of the US House of Representatives, to Taiwan in August has caused another tension in the Taiwan Strait. This paper will use this Pelosi's visit to Taiwan as an entry point to analyze the impact of this event on China, the US, and Taiwan from the theory of international relations realism. Finally, it will be analyzed that the US, to safeguard its influence in the Asia-Pacific region, has used the Taiwan issue to cause a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait to weaken China's national security and to achieve the result of the US becoming the controller of the Asia-Pacific region again. To ensure its national security, China has been conducting regular military exercises in the Taiwan Island region to strengthen its military power for self-help purposes. Taiwan, as a non-sovereign state, has acted as a pawn in the game between the two great powers, China and the United States. This incident has made China pay more attention to cross-strait relations and security in the Taiwan Strait, and has provided an opportunity for China to advance cross-strait reunification.

Keywords: US-China Relations, Situation in the Taiwan Strait, Realism.

1. Introduction

The question of Taiwan has a long history and the reasons for it are complex; in 1945 Taiwan ended its 50-year Japanese colonial status and returned to the Republic of China. After the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, the Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan after the defeat and continued to exist there under the regime of the "Republic of China". The Communist Party of China prepared for a military attack on Taiwan to achieve national liberation. The outbreak of the Korean War interrupted the process of reunification. The United States took a series of coercive measures to prevent the Beijing government from achieving the reunification of China. Since then, the United States has intervened in the Taiwan issue to ensure the political independence of Taiwan.

The Chinese Communist Party has always adhered to the "One China" principle, that is, there is only one China in the world, and both the mainland and Taiwan are part of China. The representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China are the only lawful representatives of China to the United Nations". The official legal opinion of the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat clearly states that "Taiwan, as a province of China, has no independent status" and that "the Taiwan authorities do not enjoy any form of governmental status" [1].

In July 2022, White House sources told the media that Speaker of the House Pelosi planned to visit Taiwan in August as a demonstration of "the United States rock-solid commitment to Taiwan" [2]. The Chinese foreign ministry made several statements on the issue, warning Pelosi and the US side not to touch the bottom line of the Chinese government. Subsequently, the Chinese media and several foreign media from different countries expressed their opposition to the issue, saying that it was not a clear-cut move [3]. On 2 August, US Speaker of the House Pelosi visited Taiwan in violation of the "One China" principle, despite China's repeated representations and objections. Subsequently, China strongly condemned and resolutely opposed this act; at the same time, the United Nations and several governments also expressed their adherence to the "One China" principle and their opposition to the US infringement on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity [4]. Subsequently, the Chinese side immediately took a series of countermeasures, including economic and military measures. Pelosi's

visit to Taiwan has increased tensions in the Taiwan Strait and created a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

The sovereignty issue involved in this incident is one of the basic principles in the realist theory of international relations. This article attempts to analyze the consequences of this incident for China, the United States, and Taiwan from the perspective of realist theory in international relations, to clarify the current situation in the Taiwan Strait, and to try to analyze the impact of this incident on the crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

2. Literature Review

2.1 US intervention in Taiwan

The Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and Taiwan states, "Because of the obligations of the two Parties under the Treaty, and the use of force by either Party from either area affecting the other Party, it is hereby agreed that such use of force will be a matter of mutual agreement." Feng Yilu pointed out that this treaty established the basic position of the United States on the issue of Taiwan's counter-attack on the mainland, namely that Taiwan must consult with the United States when launching non-defensive actions against the mainland, but that the consultation would not be easy to obtain American unification in practice[5].

Based on the Kennedy administration's policy and control over Taiwan, Wen Qiang believed that a counter-attack by Chiang Kai-shek's government on the mainland would not only affect the crisis of the "Republic of China", but also endanger the United States itself, so the overall strategy of the United States towards Taiwan and the mainland was neither to support Taiwan's counter-attack on the mainland nor to give up obstructing the mainland government's unification of Taiwan [6]. The United States considered Taiwan's status to be unresolved. To this day, US policy has focused on the process of resolving the Taiwan issue rather than the stated outcome.

A 2013 CRS report to the US Congress on Taiwan noted US intervention in Taiwan as an important concern, and that the US has an interest in ties or tensions across the Taiwan Strait (e.g. arms sales) that affect the international relations, US-Taiwan relations, and cooperation between the US and China in which the US intervenes [7].

2.2 Sino-American Relations

According to Wu Xinbo, a professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University, in the post-Cold War era, from a structural level and realist perspective, there is a greater focus on power contrasts and their evolution in Sino-US relations, on changes in regional and international power structures, on the zero-sum nature of relations between states, and the pursuit of relative gains[8].

With the gradual rise of China in the 21st century, on the other hand, China is gradually becoming one of the world powers that can compete with the US in some respects. Evan S. Medeiros notes that for decades, US-China relations have been marked by apparent conflicts over a range of interests, including the Taiwan issue, China's military modernization, and maritime territorial disputes. These progressively sharper issues have contributed to the widening divergence of interests and the intensification of dilemmas in national security. The potential for conflict over Taiwan remains a central, motivating feature of the Sino-US security rivalry[9].

3. Analysis of the impact of Pelosi's scuttling of Taiwan on China, the US, and Taiwan from a realism perspective

3.1 The US: mutual security exclusion between states

As an important strategy for the United States to check and balance the Asia-Pacific region, the Taiwan issue plays a more critical role in the national security and development of the United States. Taiwan has always been important security, economic and political interest of the United States.

Taiwan serves as an important influencing factor between US-China relations and the US objectively enjoys an interest in the tense Taiwan Strait situation, all of which affects international security and US-China relations [7]. The United States maintained "non-diplomatic relations" with Taiwan even after the establishment of diplomatic relations with China in 1972, and sold arms and other official transactions to Taiwan. US support for Taiwan poses a challenge to US-China relations.

On 14 October 2011, during a hearing on "Why Taiwan Matters" before the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell said that the US seeks to "rebalance" its overall priorities to focus more on the He said, "This overarching strategy is a matter of the United States. He said that "a key part of this overall strategy is to build a comprehensive, enduring and unofficial relationship between the United States and Taiwan". Campbell stressed that "the cornerstone of this relationship is our security relationship". He called the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) one of the most important pieces of "legislative leadership" and foreign policy in US history. He acknowledged that the act requires the US to maintain the ability to resist coercion, maintain peace and stability, and provide Taiwan with necessary defense items [10].

Since China's policy of reform and opening up in 1987, China's economy has continued to grow and its international standing has gradually risen, for which the United States has become wary of China's rise. According to one of the key arguments of realist theory in international relations, security between states is mutually exclusive. China's continued rise over the last 30 years has to some extent threatened the US security hold in the Asia-Pacific region. China's physical threat to its neighboring US allies (e.g. Japan, and South Korea) has expanded and the US is unable to control the situation in the Asia-Pacific region. As China gains more influence and control over the Asia-Pacific region, the US will lose its influence and control over it.

Pelosi's visit to Taiwan has sent the wrong signal to Taiwan's "Taiwan independence activists", giving them the wrong idea of using US power to counterbalance mainland China and eventually making Taiwan a sovereign state. According to the above-mentioned theory of mutual exclusion of security between states. Pelosi's visit to Taiwan as Dean of the US House of Representatives represents the unofficial image of the US, using the Taiwan issue to cause a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait to weaken China's national security and achieve the re-emergence of the US as the controller of the Asia-Pacific region.

From 3-6 August 2022, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) sent several military equipments to carry out joint exercises around the Taiwan Strait to demonstrate its determination to defend national security and sovereignty. The US has also declared that it will cross the Taiwan Strait to "ensure the safety of its allies". Pelosi's visit to Taiwan caused a military conflict between China, the US, and Taiwan, creating a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait. All three parties have increased their power in the Taiwan Strait region, but none of the international or regional powers is certain to be able to outsmart the others in a war, so the situation in the Taiwan Strait is tense, but no real war is being waged.

3.2 China: power, especially force, is the best guarantee of national security

China has always adhered to the "One China" principle and the fact that there is only one China in the world and that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China. According to the Government of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan is bound by the 1992 "1992 Consensus" of "only one China" reached by representatives of the Communist Party of China (CCP) and the then-ruling Kuomintang (KMT). Since the change of leadership in China in 2012, President Xi Jinping has taken a more assertive nationalist stance towards all the special regions he claims, including Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. Following the election of Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen, Beijing has placed cross-strait relations under greater scrutiny, and Xi has shown a willingness to use pressure to try to limit Tsai's ability to restart Taiwan's relations with the mainland [7].

Since Pelosi's claim in April 2022 that she would visit Taiwan, China has been making stern representations with the U.S. After Pelosi ignored serious protests from China and insisted on visiting Taiwan, China's eastern war zone organized operational joint exercises in the naval and airspace

around Taiwan Island from 3-5 August. By August 15, China's eastern theatre of operations was still in a position to conduct regular, combat-oriented exercises around the island of Taiwan.

In the realist theory of international relations, the security of the state is in an unprotected state, so self-help can only be achieved by strengthening military power, i.e. one's right, power being the first guarantee of the state's survival and security. National security and the modernization of China's military are also a cliché in US-China relations. China's expanding military capabilities have led to an intensification of national security competition between the two countries. Since the mid-1990s, China has gradually increased the power of its military weapons and made great strides in modernizing its military. It has built Oriental missiles, aircraft carriers, and other military equipment. Although there is a certain distance from the quantity and quality of US military equipment, it has also greatly increased China's military power. What this means for the US is that the gap between China and the US not only shrinks militarily but also in terms of the relative capabilities of China and the US. According to the basic principle of realism in international relations for a sovereign state, power, and especially force, is the best guarantee of national security. The military exercises by all sides in the Taiwan Strait triggered by Pelosi's visit to Taiwan are excellent proof that China's increased force in possession of military equipment is a safeguard for national sovereignty and a deterrent to the US and Taiwan. China's military modernization has eroded the traditional US military advantage in Asia, with the former US Deputy Secretary of Defense stating that "in a reasonable scenario, the US joint forces could face defeat at the hands of the Chinese military" [10].

3.3 Taiwan: sovereign states are the primary actors in international affairs

Since its expulsion from the UN General Assembly in 1971, Taiwan has effectively become a non-sovereign region not recognized by the international community. Although 22 countries still maintain so-called "diplomatic relations" with Taiwan, they are still a drop in the bucket. As a non-sovereign region, its regional security and politics are heavily influenced by some countries.

According to the theoretical assumption of "national unity" in the realist framework, a single state guarantees that the state can participate in international affairs as a whole and can be treated as a valid actor. Looking back at cross-strait relations today, only the "One China" principle enables mainland China and Taiwan to participate as one effective actor in a range of international affairs organized by the United Nations and the World Health Organisation. Therefore, the false implication that Pelosi has given to the forces of Taiwan independence, in this case, is a serious contradiction to the "One China" principle and the doctrine of "national unity".

The basic principle of realism in international relations states that sovereign states are the primary actors in international interests. Although the DPP in Taiwan considers Taiwan to be a "country", it still does not change the objective fact that Taiwan is not a sovereign state, and therefore Taiwan is not the main actor in international interests. The current crisis in the Taiwan Strait caused by Pelosi is a political game between China and the US. This also reflects the realist theory that the great powers are the main actors in international relations and are the direct agents in the development of changes in international relations.

4. Conclusion and future outlook of the situation in the Taiwan Strait

4.1 Conclusion

The paper begins with a brief introduction to the origins of the Taiwan issue, which leads to the views and conflicts between the parties involved in Pelosi's move to Taiwan, followed by a description of the views and opinions of China, the United States, and Taiwan on the Haitian-Taiwanese region. Finally, the impact of the incident on China, the United States, and Taiwan is analyzed from the perspective of realist theory in international relations.

As an important bastion of US regional politics in the Asia-Pacific region, the Taiwan issue is of particular importance to the interests of the US. And the impact of China's growing national power on the Asia-Pacific region has threatened US interests in the region. This article analyses the reasons

why Pelosi's visit to Taiwan has exacerbated the conflict in the Taiwan Strait from the perspective of mutual security exclusion between countries.

China has always adhered to the "One China" principle, believing that Taiwan is an internal affair of China and that no other country should interfere. Pelosi's visit to Taiwan is a provocation to this principle by the US. This article takes the view that power, and in particular force, is the best guarantee of national security. It analyzes the pressure and impact of China's military modernization on the United States, and also reflects on the forceful deterrence that China's military tour near the island of Taiwan after Pelosi's visit has had on both the United States and Taiwan, thus demonstrating that force is the best guarantee of national security.

The paper then points out that Taiwan is not a sovereign state according to UN resolutions. Following the realist theory of the state as an actor in international affairs. It is argued that Taiwan is a pawn in the game between the two great powers, China and the United States. As actors in international relations, the great powers are the direct agents of change in international relations.

4.2 Future outlook of the situation in the Taiwan Strait

Pelosi's visit to Taiwan provides an opportunity for China to promote cross-strait reunification. The Taiwan issue is a historical legacy. The United States has made Taiwan an unresolved issue as a means of constraining China and safeguarding its interests in the Asia-Pacific region. While the Chinese mainland has always adhered to the "One China" principle, it has not made Taiwan a priority issue in the context of complex international relations and the current new epidemic. Rather, it hopes to promote cross-strait reunification through Taiwan's economic dependence on the mainland. But it also promises "never to renounce the use of force". On the other hand, with the influence of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in power in Taiwan in recent years, Taiwan's "Taiwan independence" ideology has become more and more evident, and Pelosi's visit to Taiwan has brought unrealistic illusions to the island's Taiwan independence forces. The military exercises around the island also reflect China's attitude of never giving up its sovereignty over Taiwan. The tense situation in the Taiwan Strait has, on the other hand, boosted China's determination and speed to promote cross-strait reunification.

References

- [1] Resolution 2758 (XXVI) of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its twenty-sixth session. Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations. DOI: <https://www.un.org/zh/ga/26/res/ares2758.html>
- [2] Charter of the United Nations. DOI: <https://www.un.org/zh/about-us/un-charter>
- [3] Foreign Ministry: If the US side is bent on challenging China's bottom line, it will be resolutely countered!. DOI: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1739499213620804862&wfr=spider&for=pc>
- [4] UN Secretary-General affirms adherence to one-China principle. DOI: http://www.news.cn/world/2022-08/04/c_1128889685.htm
- [5] Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990)
- [6] Wang Falong. (2016). *A study on the path of safeguarding China's overseas interests from the perspective of the international system.* (Doctoral dissertation, Shandong University).
- [7] U.S.-Taiwan Relationship: Overview of Policy Issues Shirley A. Kan Specialist in Asian Security Affairs Wayne M. Morrison Specialist in Asian Trade and Finance November 6, 2013
- [8] Caixin (2022). Statement from Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. <https://international.caixin.com/2022-09-15/101940440.html>.
- [9] Taiwan Media: 2 PLA Missile Destroyers off eastern Taiwan Island, just 37 nautical miles from Hualien Harbor
- [10] DOI: <https://m.gmw.cn/baijia/2022-08/03/35929939.html>
- [11] Robert O. Worl and Gret Grant, *Beating the American at Their Own Game: An Offset Strategy with Chinese Characteristics* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, June 6, 2019)

[12] DOI:<https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/beating-the-americans-at-their-own-game>