



## THE USA NEW POLITICS IN TAIWAN

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### ABOUT ARTICLE

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the USA new politics in Taiwan. A firm commitment to protecting Taiwan's defence could deter potential Chinese aggression, reducing the risk of conflict and avoiding the costs of military confrontation. As in the 1950s, the US pledged to protect Taiwan from potential Chinese aggression where the commitment acted as a deterrent against China's potential large-scale invasion of Taiwan.

### INTRODUCTION

The US's support for Taiwan's democratic government is in line with its commitment to democracy and human rights. According to the International Trade Administration (2021), Taiwan was the U.S.'s 9th largest trading partner, with a total trade value of \$104.3 billion. Additionally, the U.S. has been the largest supplier of arms to Taiwan, with a total value of \$5.1 billion in 2020. A military conflict over Taiwan could disrupt global supply chains and have significant consequences. Therefore, The United States should adopt a strategic clarity policy that commits to protecting Taiwan from any hostile actions by China to maintain a stable economic partnership with Taiwan through committing to protect its defence. A firm commitment to protecting Taiwan's defence could deter potential Chinese aggression, reducing the risk of conflict and avoiding the costs of military confrontation. As in the 1950s, the US pledged to protect Taiwan from potential Chinese aggression where the commitment acted as a deterrent against China's potential large-scale invasion of Taiwan. The involvement of two U.S. aircraft carriers during the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis influenced China's decision to avoid military intervention against Taiwan (Douglas Porch,1999).

#### Section 1. Recommended Strategy

Furthermore, nearby countries, especially those with close economic ties to China, may view a clear commitment to protect Taiwan's security as a destabilising and potentially harmful measure to their own interests., As a close U.S. ally and sharing concerns about China's expansion in the region , in 2021, the Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro As stated that Japan would need to defend Taiwan with the United States if the island were attacked, signalling Japan's willingness to be involved in Taiwan's

defence. Similarly, South Korea, as another U.S. ally, may support the policy, although its stance would likely be more cautious due to its proximity to China and reliance on the Chinese market.

In the first year of the policy's implementation, the United States could spend \$1 billion on joint military exercises with Taiwan that concentrate on maritime security, anti-submarine warfare, and air defence. The first round of these exercises could be slated six months after the policy's initial announcement. The aim of establishing direct communication between US and Taiwanese defence authorities through regular video conferences and the exchange of liaison officers is to improve crisis-related coordination and response times. In addition, the United States could increase its military presence in the Western Pacific within the first two years of the policy's implementation by deploying an additional aircraft carrier and its associated support ships to the region. The aircraft carrier could be stationed in the South China Sea or Taiwan Strait to deter any prospective Chinese aggression. For example, the US implemented a similar approach in the 1980s when it pledged to protect Persian Gulf shipping during the Iran-Iraq War. Within the first year, the US deployed an additional carrier strike group to the region, conducted joint military exercises with regional partners, and established the Maritime Security Patrol Area program to monitor shipping traffic. This approach proved effective in deterring hostile actions against shipping and maintaining regional stability.

These steps should be accompanied by the exchange of accurate quantitative data and intelligence between the United States and Taiwan, allowing both parties to monitor and detect potential Chinese threats. In addition, periodic progress reports should be issued to evaluate the efficacy of the policy and modify strategies as necessary.

Alternative policy options such as strategic ambiguity and strategic reassurance have significant drawbacks and risks. Strategic ambiguity can increase the likelihood of misinterpretation and hostility. Strategic reassurance may be viewed as provocative by China, potentially damaging US-China relations. Therefore, the US must adopt a strategic clarity policy to effectively address the Taiwan issue and protect its interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Section 2. Strategic Policy Options**

Option One, the recommended option, in further detail

In this part, evaluated the recommended policy option of strategic clarity for Taiwan, weighing the potential benefits and drawbacks, as well as considering the assumptions and interests at play.

A firm commitment to protect Taiwan's defence could act as a strong deterrent against potential Chinese aggression, reducing the likelihood of conflict and avoiding the costs of a military confrontation. The modernization of China's military and its assertive behaviour in the region have escalated tensions and raised the likelihood of conflict regarding Taiwan. In March 2021, China carried out military drills near Taiwan, utilising numerous warplanes and ships (Brian Hioe, 2023). Additionally, China has issued multiple warnings against external involvement in the Taiwan matter.

A policy would demonstrate the US's commitment to its allies and partners in the region, building trust and bolstering confidence in the US's security guarantees. As an example, the consultations at the ministerial level of Australia and the United States (AUSTIN), held in September 2021, at which regional security issues were considered and a strong alliance between the two countries was confirmed. The joint statement recognizes the importance of maintaining a rules-based international order, including respect for freedom of navigation and flight, and expresses concern about China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States maintains enduring alliances and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region, such as with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines (The White House, 2022,

p. 8). These nations are apprehensive about the increasing assertiveness of China and the possible hazards to regional security and stability.

A policy would signal US intentions and priorities in the Asia-Pacific region to China and other regional actors. The US has a vested interest in maintaining stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region. A potential conflict involving Taiwan could have significant consequences for regional security and US interests. A commitment to defend Taiwan would signal US intentions and priorities in the Asia-Pacific region, reducing miscalculation risk and promoting stability and security.

A commitment to defend Taiwan may be perceived as a challenge to China's sovereignty and escalate the possibility of military confrontation. Strategic clarity policy may escalate US-China tensions, already strained over trade, human rights, and the South China Sea. The US's former strategic ambiguity policy provided flexibility in its relationship with China, whereas a strategic clarity policy may be viewed as a more direct challenge to China's interests and sovereignty. In August 2021, the US's top military officer, General Mark Milley, spoke with his Chinese counterpart about Taiwan and reassured him that the US did not intend to attack China. This conversation was seen as an attempt to reduce tensions between the two countries (CNN, 2021). This example highlights how the Taiwan issue can create tensions between the US and China and the potential need for diplomacy to manage these tensions.

Option Two, an alternative option.

Strategic ambiguity is a policy approach where the US refrains from explicitly committing to defending Taiwan against Chinese aggression, opting to maintain an intentionally vague stance. The objective of this approach is to preserve flexibility in the United States' reaction to a possible Taiwan conflict and prevent the escalation of tensions with China. The "One China Policy" is an example of strategic ambiguity, as it acknowledges China's sovereignty over Taiwan without explicitly recognising Taiwan as an independent state.

The US may avoid provoking China by not pledging to defend Taiwan. China has frequently cautioned against US meddling in Taiwan, calling it a violation of its sovereignty. China's foreign ministry spokesperson advised the US to "stop any form of official exchanges with Taiwan, handle the Taiwan question cautiously, and refrain from sending any wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces" after a congressional delegation visited Taiwan in April 2021. China may respond militarily if the US declares its support for Taiwan.

Strategic ambiguity policy enables the US to maintain flexibility and keep its options open in response to changing circumstances. In a Taiwan crisis, the US may opt for military aid to Taiwan without engaging in a full-scale military operation. Explicitly committing to defending Taiwan could limit the US's options and increase the risk of escalation if circumstances change.

Failure to defend Taiwan could have detrimental repercussions for the United States' credibility and reputation in the region. If the United States were to back down or fail to honour its commitment to defend Taiwan, its credibility and reputation as an ally could suffer. This may have far-reaching effects on the United States' relationships with allies and partners in the region, as well as its overall influence and standing. Some experts and commentators criticised the United States' response to the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996 as a failure to stand up to China and defend its allies. This could have had far-reaching effects on U.S. relations in the region.

If the US appears less committed to defending Taiwan, China may be more inclined to use military force, raising the risk of regional conflict. China considers Taiwan a rebellious province that should be reunited with the mainland, even through military means, causing a rise in military capabilities and tensions in the area. Unclear US policy towards Taiwan may worsen tensions and heighten the risk of

conflict or crisis. In 1996, the US deployed two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Taiwan Strait Crisis, which increased tensions and the possibility of military conflict (Douglas Porch, 1999)

Option Three, another alternative option

Strategic reassurance is a political approach aimed at convincing China that the US does not perceive its global ascent as a threat to American interests and that the US does not seek to contain China. This approach is aimed at strengthening trust and cooperation between the two nations, which ultimately reduces the likelihood of conflict. Strategic reassurance initiatives include Obama's pivot to Asia in 2011, which aimed to expand U.S. involvement in the region and strengthen closer relations with allies. This policy involved increasing American military resources in the area and negotiating a trade deal on the TPP (James McBride). This policy has been criticized for being insufficient to address China's problems and potentially exacerbating tensions between the US and China.

And policy of strategic reassurance through trust and cooperation with China can foster collaboration on global issues, including climate change, nuclear proliferation, and pandemic response. The US and China are prominent global powers with substantial influence on global affairs. Collaboration can lead to greater achievements than individual efforts. The US and China were significant contributors to the Paris Agreement, which seeks to decrease worldwide greenhouse gas emissions.

A strategic reassurance policy can mitigate the risk of miscalculation and misunderstanding between the US and China by clarifying their intentions and priorities. Misinterpretations and miscalculations may result in inadvertent outcomes and potentially exacerbate international tensions. A strategic reassurance policy can promote regional stability and reduce miscalculation risks by building trust and cooperation with China. The South China Sea has witnessed multiple US-China close encounters, prompting concerns over potential miscalculation and escalation.

Strategic reassurance policies may have potential drawbacks. Strategic reassurance policy may be interpreted as a sign of weakness by China, potentially encouraging a more assertive foreign policy. China's efforts to enhance its regional influence involve military modernization and territorial claims in the South China Sea. A strategic reassurance policy aimed at reassuring China may be perceived as neglecting the concerns of US allies and partners in the region. Critics of the Obama administration's Asia rebalance policy contended that it was perceived as feeble by China, which persisted in its aggressive foreign policy in the area.

### **Section 3. Background**

The matter of Taiwan has been a persistent cause of strain in the Asia-Pacific area. Following the conclusion of the Chinese civil war in 1949, the Communist Party assumed governance over mainland China while the vanquished Nationalist Party sought refuge in Taiwan (Cheng-feng Shih and Mumin Chen), where they established the Republic of China. Subsequently, Taiwan has operated as a de facto autonomous entity, possessing its own governance, economic system, and armed forces. Notwithstanding, China maintains its assertion that Taiwan is an integral part of its sovereign territory and has pledged to employ military means if required to achieve its reunification.

The subject under consideration pertains to the policy of the United States towards Taiwan, a democratic island nation located in the western Pacific, which is regarded as a separatist province by China. The United States has maintained a longstanding diplomatic association with Taiwan, which can be traced back to the Chinese civil war and the formation of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The United States has extended military and economic assistance to Taiwan and sustains informal diplomatic ties with the territory. The United States does not formally acknowledge Taiwan as an independent nation and has adopted a strategic ambiguity approach to prevent any potential

provocation of China. The United States has adopted a policy of strategic ambiguity concerning Taiwan, refraining from making explicit commitments to defend it or according it explicit recognition as an independent state. In recent years, the Taiwan matter has escalated in controversy due to China's heightened assertiveness in the region and Taiwan's increased integration into the global economy. China has augmented its military prowess and executed military drills in close proximity to Taiwan, alongside intensifying its diplomatic coercion on nations to acknowledge Taiwan as an integral part of China. The United States has augmented its military deployment in the area and has articulated apprehension regarding China's conduct in the Taiwan Strait.

It is imperative for the United States to meticulously evaluate the possible benefits and drawbacks of every policy alternative and opt for a path of action that optimally caters to its interests in the Asia-Pacific area. The ramifications of this decision are extensive in terms of regional security and stability, as well as the United States' associations with China and its regional allies.

One potential alternative strategy to deter China from potential aggression towards Taiwan is the implementation of a policy of strategic clarity. This policy would involve a clear and unambiguous commitment to defend Taiwan, which would also serve to provide transparency regarding the United States' intentions and priorities in the region. This policy alternative would necessitate heightened military collaboration with Taiwan and a possible deployment of supplementary United States military resources to the area. The selection of policy will ultimately hinge on various factors, such as the perceived advantages and disadvantages of each alternative, the current state of US-China relations, and the perspectives of significant stakeholders and allies in the Asia-Pacific area. There are several reasons why adopting a policy of strategic clarity may be a more effective option in relation to Taiwan. Initially, a distinct pledge to safeguard Taiwan would serve as a formidable deterrent against potential Chinese aggressions, reducing the likelihood of confrontation and circumventing the expenses of a military confrontation. The modernization of China's military and its assertive behaviour in the region have escalated tensions and raised the likelihood of conflict regarding Taiwan. In March 2021, China carried out military drills in the vicinity of Taiwan, deploying numerous warplanes and ships. The Chinese government has consistently cautioned against external intervention in the Taiwan matter. Furthermore, a resolute pledge to safeguard Taiwan may enhance the United States' alliances and partnerships in the area, fostering reliance and reinforcing assurance in the United States' security assurances. The United States maintains enduring alliances and partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region, specifically with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines. The increasing assertiveness of China and its potential impact on regional security and stability have raised concerns among these nations.

The efficacy of a resolute pledge to safeguard Taiwan is reinforced by past instances in history. In the 1950s, the United States established a definitive pledge to safeguard Taiwan in the event of any potential hostilities initiated by China (Milestones, 1953–1960) The aforementioned commitment acted as a preventive measure against China, thereby dissuading them from executing a massive incursion into Taiwan. The involvement of two U.S. aircraft carriers in the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis was instrumental in deterring China from resorting to military intervention against Taiwan.

The following policy alternative entails deliberately maintaining an equivocal stance on the degree of dedication to Taiwan with the aim of circumventing any instigation of China. Nevertheless, this methodology possesses various limitations. The lack of clarity regarding the United States' intentions and priorities in the region may result in confusion and uncertainty, thereby elevating the likelihood of miscalculation and military conflict. Moreover, the utilisation of strategic ambiguity could be perceived



as a manifestation of vulnerability by China, which may in turn bolster China's inclination to adopt a more assertive approach towards its foreign policy. During the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996, the United States implemented a policy of strategic ambiguity in response to China's missile tests near Taiwan (Brett V. Benson, 2020). The United States' position regarding intervention in the event of a conflict was ambiguous, resulting in a state of uncertainty and unease in the region.

The strategic reassurance policy option pertains to the endeavour of assuring China that the United States is not inclined towards constraining its ascension as a global power. This approach involves fostering trust and cooperation between the two nations. Nevertheless, this methodology also presents various limitations. The act of complying with China's demands or not fully addressing the apprehensions of American allies in the Asia-Pacific area could be interpreted as a sign of weakness. Moreover, the act of providing strategic reassurance could be perceived as a display of vulnerability by China, which may in turn bolster China's inclination to adopt a more assertive approach towards its foreign affairs.

The strategic "pivot" or "rebalance" to Asia, announced by U.S. President Barack Obama in 2011, aimed to enhance U.S. engagement with the region and foster stronger relationships with U.S. allies (Korean Journal of Défense Analysis, 2013). However, some critics contended that the initiative did not adequately address China's concerns and could potentially escalate tensions between the U.S. and China. As an example, the "reset" policy between the United States and Russia during the Obama administration aimed at fostering trust and cooperation. However, this policy did not prevent Russia from invading Crimea in 2014, and it led to increased tensions between the United States and its European allies. This example demonstrates that prioritizing reassurance over clear commitments to allies can inadvertently embolden adversaries and undermine regional stability.

## CONCLUSION

Within this context, it can be inferred that the Strategic Clarity option presents the most efficacious strategy for upholding regional stability and safeguarding Taiwan. The aforementioned historical instances serve to illustrate the significance of a distinct dedication in dissuading hostility and upholding steadiness. The effectiveness of Options Two (Strategic Ambiguity) and Three (Strategic Reassurance) in addressing the challenges presented by China's assertiveness in the region is comparatively lower, as indicated by the examples provided.

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