

The Taiwan Issue From the Perspective of International Crisis Management: History and Future

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The Taiwan issue discussed in this paper belongs to the theoretical crisis discussion on international relations and does not regard the Cross-Strait relations as relations between different countries. The outcome of the 2024 Taiwan Election has a great impact on the Taiwan question, the latest poll shows that the possibility of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate to come to power is still very high, because its political evolution trend of Taiwan independence still exists.

Keywords: Taiwan issue, international crisis management, Taiwan history

Introduction

The concept of crisis management both domestically and internationally had a long period, but international crisis management in the academic research is relatively modern (Yang, 2004).

In the western academic community, the strategic research school and the psychological research school respectively carried out research on crisis decision-making and crisis management in the 1960s. In the 1970s, Charles F. Hermann (1972) began to analyze crisis as a “situational variable”. The study of crisis decision-making has also become popular due to the introduction of the case of the Cuban missile crisis. In 1975, the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project was established, which compiled the International Crisis Manual and the Diplomatic Crisis Manual in the 1980s, and international crisis research entered the stage of professional systems and even operational function. In the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, the object and scope of international crisis management research expanded rapidly. In China, Guo Xuetang, Yang Jiemian, and Wang Fan all contributed to the development of international crisis management and decision-making theory.

Definition

According to the research (Brecher & Wilkenfeld, 1997/2000), an international crisis is defined by two necessary and sufficient conditions:

1. a change in type and/or increase in intensity of disruptive, i.e. hostile, verbal, or physical interactions between two or more states, with a heightened probability of military hostilities; that in turn
2. destabilises their relationship and challenges the structure of an international system—global, dominant and/or subsystem.

The One-China principle is the universal consensus of the international community and an integral part of observing the basic norms governing international relations. The Taiwan issue discussed in this paper belongs to the theoretical crisis discussion on international relations and does not regard the Cross-Strait relations as relations between different countries (The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and The State Council Information Office, 2022).

History of the Taiwan Issue: A Crisis Management Perspective

At the end of the Second World War on the Asia-Pacific front, Japan announced its unconditional surrender to the Allies. The subsequent Chinese Civil War ensued, with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) circling the government of the Republic of China led by Kuomintang (KMT) to Taiwan Island after a three-year battle. Since then, the CCP established the People's Republic of China in Mainland China, and hostilities across the Taiwan Strait remained.

The First Taiwan Strait Crisis and Decision-Making Management in the 1950s

On March 3, 1954, the U.S. Consulate General in Taipei recommended to Washington “immediately intervene” “in the name of the United States itself or in the name of the United Nations”. On January 18, 1955, the People's Liberation Army launched the first joint land, after Jiangshan Island battle, and successfully liberated the island, directly threatening the Dachen Island, the Kuomintang army entrenched in the southeast coastal islands of Zhejiang and Fujian. On January 28, 1955, the United States concocted the so-called “New Zealand” proposal.

The New Zealand proposal was condemned by Chinese on both sides of the Strait. Chiang made clear his opposition to the New Zealand proposal. In response to the New Zealand proposal, the proposal was put on indefinite hold in the Security Council, and the New Zealand proposal secretly operated by the US government went bankrupt. This is another contest between China and the United States after the Korean War. During this period, the Eisenhower administration of the United States constantly brandished nuclear weapons, trying to threaten the mainland to make concessions, and finally got into a dilemma.

The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis and Kinmen Artillery Battle

In the summer of 1958, the United States and Britain respectively sent troops to Jordan and Lebanon, and the Middle East was surging. Chiang Kai-shek once again called for a “counterattack on the mainland” and provoked militarily. In order to punish the Gulf authorities, show solidarity with the Middle East, and teach the U.S. imperialists a lesson, the PLA began shelling Kinmen at 17:30 on August 23, also known as the “823 Artillery Battle”. The People's Liberation Army was ordered to fire only at Chiang Kai-shek ships, not at American ships. As a result, the American ships turned around and ran away. The so-called US-Taiwan mutual defense Agreement is just a scrap of paper.

In early October, the People's Liberation Army announced the “single date attack, double date no attack” until 1979, when China and the United States established diplomatic relations. The Kinmen artillery battle is the continuation of the second Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, and is also the last large-scale battle between the army, navy, and air force of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party so far. The political significance of the Kinmen artillery battle is higher than the military significance.

Sino-US Relations Since the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations and the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis

In 1995, the U.S. government allowed Lee Denghui to visit the United States. Lee took the opportunity to

openly engage in separatist activities in the United States. Lee has successively thrown out the so-called “one China, one Taiwan” and other divisive remarks. As a warning to Lee and other separatist forces, in July 1995 and March 1996, the Chinese government announced large-scale military exercises near the Taiwan Strait that included missiles flying over the island. At that time, the Clinton administration of the United States sent two aircraft carrier battle groups, more than 10 ships, and three nuclear submarines to cruise the waters near Taiwan, and the military standoff was once very tense.

American Strategy Towards China Since 2000

Since 2000, the United States has experienced a succession of Democratic and Republican administrations, from Clinton to George W. Bush. From establishing a “constructive strategic partnership” to a “strategic competitor”, from a “vague strategy” to a “clear strategy”, from “idealism” to “realism”, from “confrontation” and “détente” to “contradiction” and “cooperation”, the two sides have undergone a remarkable turnaround.

From George W. Bush Government to Joe Biden Government

During the Bush administration, the United States government’s policy toward the two sides of the Taiwan Strait was the One-China policy, which was embodied in the three joint communiques, and also adhered to the norms and positions of the Taiwan Relations Act on Taiwan. The U.S. relationship with China is an important part of the U.S. strategy to promote a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia-Pacific region.

The central goal of the Obama Administration’s Asia-Pacific strategy is to comprehensively consolidate and strengthen U.S. leadership in the Asia-Pacific region, thereby maintaining a stable and secure regional environment for the long term, and a regional order based on open economies, the peaceful resolution of disputes, and respect for universal rights and freedoms. In the process of implementing the Asia-Pacific strategy in the first term, the United States took “strengthening alliance relations”, “building new partners”, and “participating in multilateral mechanisms” as important means to actively shape the influence and leadership of the United States on the three fronts of “maintaining regional security”, “building a prosperous economy”, and “respecting universal values”. It includes the “return” strategy, the “pivot” strategy, and the “rebalance” strategy.

The Trump administration mainly adopts a competitive strategy towards China, positioning China as a “strategic competitor” revisionist power. On March 16, 2018, President Trump signed the Taiwan Dealings Act, also known as the Taiwan Travel Act. In August 2019, the Trump administration sold 66 F-16 fighter jets to the Tsai Ing-wen administration.

At the beginning of the Biden administration in 2021, China was repositioned as the only adversary in the world with the potential to combine its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological might to challenge the stable and open international system.

The Development of Cross-Strait Relations Under the 1992 Consensus Principle

After the Hong Kong talks in October 1992 and a series of subsequent correspondence and telephone exchanges, a consensus was reached that “both sides of the Taiwan Straits adhere to the One-China principle”, which was later summarized as the “1992 Consensus”.

Predicated on a strong Chinese nationalism, the Xi-Ma summit, therefore, produced a message to the international community in general and the USA in particular—that is, the Taiwan Strait issue remains China’s internal affair. Xi (2015) said, “The two sides of the Taiwan Strait should prove with concrete moves to the world that the Chinese from both sides have the capabilities and wisdom to solve their own problems.”

Since the DPP came to power in 2016, the Taiwan independence trend has become increasingly serious. U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other senior officials are keen to visit Taiwan in order to break through potential restrictions and create a tradition. Once the United States believes that such high-level visits to Taiwan have become routine, such visits will be normalized in the future, regardless of the attitude of the Chinese central government.

Ten minutes after Pelosi landed in Taiwan, China announced the area of our military exercises, and even the precise coordinates of the area were given, which was clearly prepared long ago. The Chinese central government's strategy toward Taiwan has a strategic step, which is to deepen step by step, and to choose the right time to implement it gradually. Blockade of Taiwan should also be within the strategic steps, the Chinese government in the Pelosi incident to promote their own strategy against Taiwan, to what step.

The so-called "middle Strait line" no longer exists. According to the four-point longitude and latitude line released by the exercise and training, it can also be seen that the exercise and training area has almost surrounded Taiwan. The island's main ports have been blocked. Moreover, this exercise is a joint exercise of multiple services and arms. From now on, the PLA exercises in the Taiwan Strait will no longer have regional restrictions, and will occasionally demonstrate its naval and air blockade capabilities. Military exercises are often conducted at the doorstep of the Taiwan authorities, and this psychological deterrent makes people shudder. This is a substantial breakthrough.

The relationship between Sino-US friction and the liberation of Taiwan should be put in perspective. The One-China principle is the basic premise of China's diplomatic relations with other countries and China's core interests, and the liberation of Taiwan is our unfinished war of liberation. Although our liberation of Taiwan will affect the strategic space of the United States to a certain extent, for the United States, with its global interests in mind, Taiwan is not their core interest, but only a pawn in their hands. China has a core interest in the Taiwan issue, and its strategy is to eliminate interference from the United States, rather than to confront the United States.

Military Preparations for a Potential Armed Unification

In his remarks during the 20th National Congress, Xi pointed out that Beijing would "never promise to renounce the use of force" to achieve the great goal of national reunification. As China continues to seek ways to negotiate peaceful solutions over the Taiwan Strait, a growing disparity exists between the ideals of peaceful unification and the harsh reality. A recent poll by the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation shows 48.9 percent of Taiwanese support obtaining formal national independence, and 11.8 percent support unification with China (Taibei Times, 2023).

This is especially concerning combined with the fact that an overwhelming majority of workforce respondents articulated that Taiwan should declare independence in the future. Such a trend of exacerbating tension across the Taiwan Strait reveals itself both from governmental foreign affairs policies and public opinions, which can ultimately result in military confrontations. In a January 2023 memo issued to the US Air Force, General Mike Minihan said, "I hope I am wrong. My gut tells me we will fight in 2025." (Xinhua News, 2023).

Conclusion: The Future of Taiwan Issue Under the Theory of Crisis Management

The future resolution of the Taiwan issue depends on three aspects, the outcome of the 2024 Taiwan election has a great impact on the Taiwan question, the latest poll shows that the possibility of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate to come to power is still very high, because its political evolution trend of Taiwan

independence still exists.

For the United States, Taiwan is not a core interest of the United States, but the Taiwan issue is a core interest of China. Taking Ukraine and Israel as examples, Taiwan can be used as an equivalent frame of reference, but it cannot be an equivalent, and the United States can only symbolically wave the flag in the situation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Whether Taiwan is not unified, independent, or armed depends on the determination and will of the mainland, as the white paper vows:

At present, under the background of profound and complex changes in both domestic and international situations, promoting the complete reunification of the motherland is facing a new situation. The Communist Party of China and the Chinese government have the comprehensive strength and confidence to navigate complex situations and overcome risks and challenges, and are fully capable of advancing the great cause of national reunification.

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