

**HOW DO NATIONAL ELECTION OUTCOMES AFFECT  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS? A CASE STUDY OF TAIWAN, CHINA  
AND THE UNITED STATES**

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by

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# **ABSTRACT**

How Do National Election Outcomes Affect International Relations? A Case Study of Taiwan, China and the United States

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## **Literature Review**

There is a debate among scholars over whether national elections have farther-reaching implications outside the immediate country. Scholars have also debated the effects of national elections on countries with relations to the nation holding the election. However, not only does this paper look to demonstrate how national election results can influence relations of states with that holding the elections, but also its effect on relations between countries that have a stake in the election outcome. The conflicting political, economic, and strategic agendas of China and the US make Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Election an ideal case to show how Taiwan's national election outcome does not just influence the policies of the US and China toward Taiwan, but how they can also change the political and diplomatic nature of the U.S.-China relationship.

## **Thesis Statement**

My thesis locates an important case in a larger context: Taiwan, and how its elections affect relations between Taiwan and China, Taiwan and the United States, and China and the United States.

## **Theoretical Framework**

I will be undertaking a qualitative case analysis of the effects of Taiwanese Elections on relations between Taiwan, China, and the United States. In addition, I will use a historical framework approach to analyze key historical developments of the trilateral relationship in order to better understand the current state of relations between the three countries.

## **Project Description**

This thesis will look to comparatively analyze the main Taiwanese Presidential candidates' policies, examine Taiwan's past election patterns, and discuss the political and economic implications of the 2020 Taiwanese Presidential elections for Taiwan, China, and the United States. Taiwan's disputed political status along with the current power competition between the United States and China provides an appropriate study to show how in an increasingly globalized world, elections don't just affect the country itself, it can affect the global order and international relations.

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## KEY WORDS

DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
KMT	Kuomintang Nationalist Party
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
CEC	Taiwan's Central Election Commission
PLA	People's Liberation Army
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act

## INTRODUCTION

Taiwan's political status is a point of contention within Taiwan and the international community. As a result, Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Elections have significant political implications for its future. Two presidential candidates have emerged from Taiwan's two main political parties: the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Kuomintang Nationalist Party (KMT). The DPP, led by incumbent president Tsai Ing-Wen, rejects the "One China" framework, seeking official recognition of Taiwanese political independence from the United Nations and reduced economic dependence on China. Meanwhile, the KMT, represented by Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-Yu, focused his campaign on the eventual "reunification" with China and the need for economic improvement. This election carries significant weight, essentially acting as "a referendum on the nature of ties with Beijing [and] [Washington]" (Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies 2019, np). While the United States looks to extend its ideological influence on Taiwan and serve as a balancing power to Chinese aggression, the CCP has been focused on "[dominating] regional and strategic economic institutions" in East Asia through "assertive militarization of regional waters [and] economic coercion" (Council on Foreign Relations 2018, np). Ukraine's 2019 Presidential Elections presents a similar case study as part of a strategic power rivalry between the U.S. and Russia for influence in the Ukraine, a rivalry exacerbated by Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014. As such, the election's outcome has broader political implications for the relationship between the U.S. and Russia, but especially for relations between the two nations and the Ukraine.

On January 11, 2020, Taiwanese citizens re-elected President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party, receiving a record 8.17 million votes, the most ever for a



Taiwanese presidential candidate. More than half a year ago, DPP's Tsai was behind KMT's Han Kuo-yu in the polls; however, her support for the Hong Kong protests significantly increased her popularity as she was ultimately able to attain fifty-seven percent of the popular vote in what was considered a landslide victory.

Despite knowledge of these results, this paper looks to consider the implications of either candidate winning the election. Such an analysis allows for a full examination of the possible impacts of the Taiwanese national election on both Taiwan's relations with China and the U.S., but also the U.S.-China relationship. The implications of elections where both powers have strategic or economic stakes create advantages for a nation in a power rivalry, especially if their candidate of choice assumes power. Therefore, this case should be important to scholars, especially since many believe the U.S. and China are heading toward a path of competition and possibly some semblance of warfare. As a result, I will argue that the critical issue is understanding what either a DPP or KMT candidate's presidential victory means for Taiwan's political future, and more importantly, the future direction of the trilateral relationship.

## CHAPTER I

### TAIWAN: HISTORY AND 2020 MAIN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Taiwan is an island nation located in the western Pacific Ocean, lying about one hundred miles east of China across the Taiwan Strait and about one thousand three hundred forty-five miles south from Japan. The climate of Taiwan is tropical and marine, with its population exhibiting a coastal settlement distribution on the north and west coasts. According to the CIA World Factbook in 2018, the population of Taiwan is 23,545,963, with Han Chinese composing 95% of the population. Taiwan currently has a dynamic capitalist economy that is driven by industrial manufacturing and exports of electronics, machinery and petrochemicals. Taiwan's government uses a semi-presidential republic system in which the eligible population directly votes for the President every four years. The official language of Taiwan is Mandarin Chinese, though Taiwanese Hokkien, Hakka dialects, and indigenous languages are practiced as well.

#### **Historical Background**

While many academic sources analyze the historical background of Taiwan starting from a post-World War II context, the truth is Taiwan's history requires an earlier and deeper look in order to understand the current political divide in Taiwan. Kuomintang leader Chiang Kai-shek (1948-1975) and his son, Chiang Ching-kuo's (1978-1988) authoritarian regime restricted the study of Taiwan and its history during their rule. It was only after Taiwan's democratization under the leadership of President Lee Teng-hui in 1988 that saw more scholarly work and research explore Taiwan's history, providing new insights and perspectives.

Taiwan's earliest inhabitants are said to have migrated from the Indonesian and Philippine archipelagos as well as southeastern China around 15,000 years ago. These settlers

were known as Austronesian aboriginals who formed tribes and groups in Taiwan's lowlands and mountains. When the Dutch East India Company arrived in southern Taiwan in search of rumored gold during the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan had no permanent Han Chinese communities. Han Chinese only came to Taiwan temporarily for trade, fishing and piracy with the Taiwanese aboriginals. In 1622, the Dutch colonized Taiwan, establishing commercial and military bases in order to trade with Japan and China, and defend against the nearby Portuguese and Spanish colonies in Southeast Asia. By 1636, the Dutch colonial administration began farming land out to Chinese sojourners in order to acquire a more consistent food supply and regular tax revenue (Morris 2004, 7-8). In 1650, a period when China allowed its citizens to live abroad, around 25,000 Han Chinese migrated to the Dutch-controlled Taiwan to grow and sell rice and vegetables, as well as to fish and hunt. This point marked a significant migration period in which many Han Chinese fled to Taiwan to escape the Ming-Qing dynasty transition, while other Chinese sailed on Dutch ships to Taiwan, drawn by the Dutch promises of modern tools and crop seeds for profitable farm labor. The imported Chinese labor provided the Dutch with essential export products needed to maintain the colony, creating a strong economic relationship between the two nations. However as China's Manchu Qing Dynasty transitioned to power, days of the Dutch occupying Taiwan were numbered. Faced with Chinese uprisings in Taiwan and China's reconsideration of Taiwan's importance to the mainland, the Dutch were driven out, thereby establishing Han Chinese control over the island.

Following the fall of the Ming Dynasty, Zheng Chenggong (Koxinga), a rebel Ming loyalist, retreated to Taiwan in 1662 with a fleet of two hundred ships and twenty-five thousand men and retook control of Taiwan from the Dutch. Koxinga's forces and the fifty thousand Han Chinese who were settled in Taiwan easily forced out the much smaller Dutch contingent.

Although Koxinga died four months after establishing his base in Taiwan, his son took the responsibility of expanding land cultivation and transforming the culture, economy, and politics of Taiwan in accordance with Chinese models. Zheng's regime provided Chinese soldiers with lands and supplies, encouraged Chinese migrants to open up new farmland, and established Chinese schools and temples in settler and native areas (Morris 2004, 9). During Zheng's occupation, the Chinese population in Taiwan reached a hundred thousand, rivaling the population of Austronesian natives. However, despite the increased population of HanChinese in Taiwan, in 1683, the Qing Dynasty's forces attacked Zheng's army, effectively taking Taiwan by force and integrating Taiwan into the Qing Empire as a prefecture of China's Fujian province.

After the Qing Dynasty established a formal administration in Taiwan, Admiral Shi Lang, a Chinese commander-in-chief during the Ming and Qing eras, consolidated rule in Taiwan and assured the Chinese and aboriginal populations that the new Qing government had benevolent intentions (Morris 2004, 10). Qing officials feared the possibility of rebellions caused by Ming remnants and the aboriginal population's frustration with the growing Chinese population. As a result, Qing officials in Taiwan ruled with a cautious agenda, granting certain liberties to Taiwanese aboriginals who lived in the mountainous areas and regulating Chinese immigration to the island. The first century of Qing rule in Taiwan saw policies that protected Austronesian aboriginal land rights, while also attempting to integrate them into Chinese systems of education and farming. Moreover, in 1684, Admiral Shi Lang ordered that any Chinese sojourners without a wife or land property must return to China, while Qing officials prohibited family migration to Taiwan, hoping to establish Taiwan as an "agricultural colony" whose Chinese population would consist of seasonal migrant laborers. Despite the Qing Dynasty's attempt to tightly regulate Chinese immigration to Taiwan, immigration continued as young Chinese men moved to Taiwan

without any family ties. These Chinese men found social support and belonging by associating themselves with Chinese settler groups who came from the same Chinese provinces like Fujian and Guangdong. The Hoklos from Fujian and Hakkas from Guangdong would often have land disputes or form anti-Qing revolts, creating the disorderly and violent frontier that the Qing Empire had feared. Without a formal military presence in Taiwan to quell the rebellions, Qing officials would pay Taiwanese aboriginals to fight the rebels, provide scholarships to Taiwanese natives seeking social advancement, and exempt farmers from land taxes during droughts (Morris 2004, 10).

During the late 1700s, the Qing Dynasty's commitment to Taiwan began decreasing due to internal issues in the mainland such as overpopulation, corruption, and domestic unrest. From the 1780 until 1870, Qing rulers relied on corrupt and unqualified officials to govern Taiwan and maintain trade and peace. It would take imperialist interest in Taiwan from foreign powers for the Qing Dynasty to reconsider Taiwan's importance. The Sino-French War (1884-1885) saw French forces attempting to invade Taiwan, despite the French campaign's focus on Vietnam. This invasion prompted the Qing Dynasty to upgrade Taiwan from a prefecture of the Fujian province to an individual Chinese province. Furthermore, the Qing would undertake progressive reforms in Taiwan such as modernizing its military, education, commercial sector, and political institutions, particularly in northern Taiwan, to show foreign powers the Qing Dynasty's ability to transform Taiwan into a "foundation of national wealth and power."

Despite Qing efforts to reform Taiwan, Japan's expansionist and imperialist agenda during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century complicated Taiwan's progress and status as well as China's plans for Taiwan. Japan's Meiji Restoration in 1868 proved to be a turning point for Japan as it abandoned its feudal system, industrialized its economy, and modernized its political institutions.

In 1895, after Japan defeated China in the Sino-Japanese War, Japan and China would agree that Taiwan and the Penghu Islands would become a Japanese colony through the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Japan had interest in Taiwan dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and with Taiwan as its newest colony, Japan would be able to have a new source of raw materials for its industries, the ability to relocate its rapidly growing population and create a colonial market for Japanese goods, and an important strategic outpost and defense post to its south.

Initially, Taiwanese resisted Japanese rule; in May 1895, Taiwanese forces established the Taiwan Republic. However, it only took a few days before a Japanese military force of over twelve thousand troops occupied Northern Taiwan and ended the ruling government. Taiwan would be Japan's first overseas colony, with the population primarily consisting of Han Chinese and Taiwanese aboriginals. While Japanese colonialists strictly governed Taiwan, the government had benevolent intentions for the Taiwanese people and aimed to assimilate them into Japanese society. In fact, Japan set out to modernize Taiwan as a test to show other imperial powers the successes of Japan's modern colonial theories. The Japanese government started projects under the Chief Administrator of the Government-General of Taiwan Goto Shimpei (1898–1906) that “built modern roads and railroads, [established] intensive and invasive police institutions, [expanded] postal and telegraph networks, [introduced] modern banking and currency measures, [founded] modern hospitals and public health services, and [standardized] weights and measures” (Morris 2004, 14). Furthermore, the Japanese also modernized Taiwan's agricultural system, reforming farming techniques to expand production of crops and instituting improved breeding methods for poultry, fruits, vegetables, and tea. Japan modernized Taiwan's education and culture through importing Japan's education system and enforcing the use of Japanese among Taiwanese. It is important also to note how the Westernization's influence on

Japan also shaped its governance of Taiwan. In 1911, the Japanese government began an acculturation campaign, pressuring Taiwanese men to stop wearing Manchu-style clothing and queues that would make Taiwanese society appear “backward” and adopt more modern, westernized clothing. Similar cultural policies implemented involved encouraging Taiwanese to change their Chinese name to Japanese, quit smoking opium, and end the practice of foot-binding for women. These language and name-changing policies were seen as a process of Japanese assimilation as it served to eradicate past Chinese influence and introduce aspects of Japanese social culture to Taiwan. Moreover, these policies focused on reconstructing Taiwanese cultural identity to be more Japanese.

However, despite the Japanese government’s attempt to assimilate and modernize their Taiwanese natives, they still viewed the Taiwanese as second-class imperial subjects. The Japanese adopted British colonial models of governing and Western strategies of legitimizing punishment through “civilizing” native practices. As a result, this treatment produced social movements in which Taiwanese colonials demanded for greater equality under the Japanese government. These movements coincided with greater Japanese understanding of Taiwan’s importance to the Japanese economy, which eventually led to Japan granting “local autonomy” to more Taiwanese cities and districts. Taiwan’s importance only grew as a vital contributor of industrial and agricultural production during Japan’s military campaigns in the Second Sino-Japanese War and Second World War. However, rather than further liberties, this resulted in the enforcement of Japanese assimilation policies such as the Kominka Movement, which saw the transformation of Buddhist temples into Shinto shrines and required Taiwanese schools to teach Japanese instead of Taiwanese. The assimilation campaign was seen as more aggressive as it was a response to war and the geopolitical state between Japan and China. By 1941, with World War

If expanding, the Japanese government encouraged Taiwanese men to serve in the Japanese military, which saw at least two hundred thousand Taiwanese fight for Japan during World War 2 (Morris 2004, 17). However, the Japanese government also forcefully took at least twelve hundred Taiwanese women to war fronts to serve as comfort women for the Japanese military. Nevertheless, because Taiwan was an important base and industrial center for the Japanese military, Taiwan became a frequent target for American air strikes once the US entered the war in 1942. Furthermore, the Cairo Declaration of 1943, a conference attended by US President Franklin Roosevelt, UK Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and General Chiang Kai-shek of the ROC, required that Japan return Taiwan and the Penghu Islands to the ROC, effectively renouncing previous treaties signed between China and Japan. Upon Japan's surrender in 1945, US forces were present in Taiwan on behalf of the Allied Powers to authorize Japan's surrender and transfer political control of the island to Chiang Kai-shek and the ROC government.

When the Taiwanese realized their former Japanese colonizers would be leaving the island, they reacted to this news with excitement and were especially welcoming to the arrival of the ROC forces whom they regarded as their liberators. However, this excitement would be short-lived as the Chinese arrivals to Taiwan "looked and behaved more like a coolie than a soldier" (Morris 2004, 21 as cited in Peng 1972, 51-52). The ROC government still viewed the Taiwanese as Japanese collaborators and as a result, the ROC began campaigns to "sinicize" all aspects of Taiwanese society, thereby eradicating any past Japanese influence and establishing Chinese political, economic and cultural control. Moreover, because Mainland China was faced with its own civil war between the Kuomintang Nationalist Party under Chiang Kai-shek and Communist Party forces led by Mao Zedong, the ROC government under Chiang took full control of Taiwan's economy, using Taiwan's accumulated wealth during Japanese rule to



support their war efforts in China. Due to the oppressive nature of ROC rule, tensions between the Taiwanese population and the Chinese regime reached a notable peak on February 28, 1947 (an incident also known as 228) when Taiwanese protested the corrupt and undemocratic rule of the ROC, which led to the ROC military violently suppressing the demonstrators, with an estimated twenty-eight thousand believed to be killed. This also led the ROC to systematically arrest and execute Taiwanese elites such as doctors, lawyers, academics and intellectuals who were seen as a threat to ROC rule.

In 1949, Mao's Communist Party took control of Mainland China, declaring the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole, ruling government of China. This loss forced Chiang and his nationalist forces to retreat to Taiwan, although they were still committed to retaking control of Mainland China. Nevertheless, Chiang's rule in Taiwan received the support of the U.S. government and the United Nations, allowing Chiang's ROC to be recognized as the rightful government of China until 1971.

With Taiwan as the last beacon of hope and only source of power for retaking Mainland China, Chiang Kai-shek, along with the U.S. government, was able to transform Taiwan from an agricultural to a major industrial and commercial economy. The U.S. heavily involved itself in Taiwan's export-oriented economy, subsidizing export production and buying nearly half of Taiwan's exports to prove the successes of capitalism as opposed to communism. Taiwan's industrial development, land reforms, and education system were some of the factors responsible for Taiwan's economic boom during the 1950s; however, political and social issues remained. Taiwan was an authoritarian regime controlled by Chiang's Kuomintang Party, who imposed martial law to ensure limited opposition and to justify possible communist threats to Taiwan. Chiang also looked to suppress Taiwanese identity, specifically targeting the Taiwanese

language by punishing those who spoke it through fines or public humiliation. Limited political expression and resentment among the Taiwanese population to the ROC's rule only served to erode Taiwan's international standing as a free, democratic China. In 1971, the PRC replaced the ROC's seat in the UN Security Council as a result of improved relations between Washington and Beijing, and more global recognition of the PRC as the true government of China. While the UN offered Chiang a dual-representation agreement in which the People's Republic of China and ROC would be separate legitimate governments, he refused as he believed the ROC was the rightful government of Mainland China. Furthermore, as a strategic move against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, the normalization of relations between the U.S. and the PRC beginning in 1972 saw a dramatic reduction of Taiwan's diplomatic recognition internationally.

Chiang Kai-shek's death in 1975 began a slow process of liberalization in Taiwan as his son, Chiang Ching-kuo succeeded him as the leader of Taiwan. Living in Taiwan longer than in China, Chiang's son "had a much more tolerant view of Taiwanese culture and political activity, and almost immediately set out to increase Taiwanese participation at the highest levels of ROC governance." Despite his efforts to reform the Kuomintang's discriminatory policies toward the Taiwanese, the younger Chiang did not allow any opposition to his rule. Chiang used a secret police force to suppress dissidents and was behind a violent government crackdown on pro-democracy and human rights demonstrations in 1979. This event was known as the Kaohsiung Incident, which was considered an important turning point for Taiwan as it motivated the Taiwanese community into political action that would lead to the eventual transition to democracy in Taiwan. Ironically, Chiang played an direct role in Taiwan's democratization process as well, ending Taiwan's thirty-eight years of martial law in 1987, ending Chinese

representation in ROC's elected bodies, and choosing a Taiwanese successor in Lee Tung-hui (Morris 2004, 27).

After Chiang Ching-kuo's death in 1988, Lee Tung-hui assumed leadership of the ROC and worked to democratize Taiwan's political system, looking to transform Taiwan into a free, democratic society. President Lee gave more political power to Taiwanese citizens within the local and federal governments by allowing opposition parties and emphasized Taiwanese nationalism by promoting Taiwan's history and culture to counter the KMT's pro-China sentiments. While working toward the political liberalization of Taiwan during the 1990s, Lee also significantly boosted Taiwan's economy by prioritizing technology and electronic exports that made Taiwan one of the world's most important suppliers of computer hardware. As a result, Taiwan's modern economy and exports were crucial to the global technology supply chains while its sovereignty and role in global institutions (WHO, UN, etc.) was constrained by the PRC's gradual emergence on the international stage and its goal of reunification with Taiwan. This issue has led to the polarization of politics in Taiwan, and with President Lee's establishment of Taiwan's first direct presidential election in 1996, the issue of Taiwan's political status and the approach to cross-strait relations became the defining issue for Taiwanese voters and its main political parties.

### **Analysis of 2020 Taiwanese Election Candidate Positions**

#### *Han Kuo-yu (KMT)*

After Han became Mayor of Kaohsiung in 2018 in a historically DPP dominated area, he used the momentum to build support for his candidacy in the 2020 Taiwan Presidential election. In July 2019, Han was formally nominated as Kuomintang presidential primary candidate. While known for his populist rhetoric, Han's views towards China and the Communist China's support

for his candidacy represent his party's main policy positions. Han supports dialogue with the CCP, has advocated for greater economic ties with China, and opposes Tsai Ing-wen's unpopular domestic policies. However, most importantly, support for Han can be attributed to his promises of significantly improving Taiwan's economy by becoming more economically and culturally linked with China, whether it is through trade or improved relations. Han supports the idea that China and Taiwan belong to "One China" as he believes this consensus will bring stability to cross-strait relations.

*Tsai Ing-wen (DPP)*

Elected President of Taiwan in 2016, Tsai Ing-wen is a U.S. and U.K. educated lawyer and politician. Tsai's 2020 presidential campaign centered on rejecting the 1992 Consensus, having stated that Taiwan does not need to declare independence as it is already an independent country. Tsai and the DPP have run on a platform that stresses freedom, democracy, and human rights, key pillars to maintaining Taiwan's sovereignty. Tsai has also pursued greater economic independence from China by diversifying Taiwan's trade partners, outlined by the New Southbound Policy. Considered Tsai's most significant foreign policy initiative, the New Southbound Policy looks to expand Taiwan's presence in the Indo-Pacific (18 countries) by pushing for more cultural, educational, technological, agricultural, and economic cooperation and exchanges. This plan represents a clear effort to enhance Taiwan's regional integration, a strategy of economic development to position and revalue Taiwan as an important player within Asia.

Furthermore, Tsai supports more cooperation and closer relations with the U.S. and Japan, as enhanced relations with these powerful nations aligns with her goals of better

protecting Taiwan's sovereignty from China and increasing Taiwan's recognition within the international community.

## CHAPTER II

### TAIWAN-CHINA RELATIONS

#### **Historical Background of Taiwan-China Relations (Post-World War II)**

##### *First Taiwan Strait Crisis*

Following their defeat during the Chinese Civil War and subsequent retreat to Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek's Republic of China government was still engaged in military conflicts with Mao Zedong's People's Republic of China as Chiang looked to regain control of China and no peace treaty had been signed. In 1954, after the Korean War and the removal of U.S. military in the Taiwan Strait, Chiang deployed ROC forces to Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu, two ROC controlled offshore islands located in the Taiwan Strait, for strategic defense purposes. The PRC's People's Liberation Army responded to the ROC military movements by bombarding both islands with heavy artillery and seizing the Yijiangshan Islands under the justification of "liberating" Taiwan, prompting the First Taiwan Strait Crisis. Due to U.S. fears of the spread of communism and the strategic importance of Taiwan during the Cold War, these engagements led the United States to consider intervening on Taiwan's behalf, at first issuing nuclear threats to China, but then agreeing to a Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROC government in 1954 that would allow American forces to defend Taiwan from an armed PLA attack. The possibility of an American military intervention and the lack of support from the Soviet Union was enough to force the PRC to temporarily suspend its military operations in the Taiwan Strait; however, this did not prevent the PLA from increasing its military capabilities in this region.

### *Second Taiwan Strait Crisis*

Tensions between the PRC and ROC governments remained as Chiang Kai-shek refused to remove troops from the Quemoy and Matsu islands. Those tensions escalated in 1958 with the American military focused on the Middle East and Mao needing popular mobilization behind his plan to transform Mainland China through the Great Leap Forward plan, an economic and social development project. In August 1958, the PLA resumed its heavy artillery bombardment on both the Quemoy and Matsu islands, prompting the United States to honor their mutual defense treaty with the ROC by sending American air and naval forces to the Taiwan Strait. American involvement and their bolstering of the ROC's military capabilities led to the decrease of PLA artillery shell attacks, bringing the crisis to an end. However, the PRC and ROC governments would agree to an informal arrangement where they would shell each other on alternate days, continuing until the normalization of US-China relations in 1979.

### *1992 Consensus*

After PRC-ROC military engagements ended and Taiwan lost its diplomatic recognition in the UN in 1979, Taiwan-China relations considerably improved. In 1987, a travel ban to Mainland China was lifted in Taiwan, allowing Taiwanese residents to visit their relatives in Mainland China. In 1988, as part of the 22 Point Regulation, Taiwanese businesses were encouraged to invest in China and were ensured that they would not be nationalized, that Taiwanese exports would be free from tariffs, and that Taiwanese businessmen would be granted visas to allow for less restricted movement. These developments helped thaw relations, setting the stage for cross-strait talks aimed at settling political disputes and achieving a peaceful resolution.

The ROC's KMT agreed to begin talks with Beijing, but only on an unofficial level. As a result, the ROC created the Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF), while Beijing established the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) that enabled both the ROC and PRC to begin non-governmental negotiations regarding cross-strait relations without "official" contact with each other. On November 1992, semi-official representatives from the ROC and the PRC met in British Hong Kong to settle disputes regarding the One China Principle. Both the ROC and PRC had previously agreed that there is only one China and sought reunification; however, their political interpretations differed. Beijing to this day regards the PRC as the "one China" and Taiwan as a Special Administrative Region of China. Meanwhile, Taiwan understood "One China" as represented by the ROC, whose "sovereignty extends to the whole China, but at present its governing power only extends to Taiwan, the Penghu Islands, Quemoy, and Matsu." The ROC agrees "Taiwan is indeed part of China, but the mainland is also a part of China" (Teon 2016, np). Nevertheless, the meeting produced different understandings of cross-strait politics. The ROC concluded from the meeting that the "Consensus" meant that while they would agree there is only one China, both governments would continue to "agree to disagree" which government was the legitimate government of China, outlined by the formula "One China, Respective Interpretations." On the other hand, the PRC understood the meeting as a universal consensus with the PRC being the sole government of China and Taiwan, but did not acknowledge that Taiwan had a different interpretation of "One China." In reality, the 1992 meeting was not a consensus in any sense, but more of a strategy to indirectly state their respective positions regarding the legitimate government of China, which would pave a path that allowed both sides to cooperate and negotiate on non-political issues that would be mutually beneficial.



## **Analysis of Past Taiwanese Elections (1996-2016) and PRC Activity**

### *1996 Taiwanese Presidential Election and Third Taiwan Strait Crisis*

On March 23, 1996, Taiwan held its first direct presidential election in what is considered a historic affirmation of Taiwan's transition to democracy. Lee Tung-hui and Peng Ming-min represented the two main political parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), respectively. Lee was the President of Taiwan before the election, whose public stance toward reunification with China was ambiguous, however his democratic reforms suggested support for Taiwanese independence and were seen as threats to the PRC's claim over Taiwan. It should be noted that because Taiwan was an authoritarian state until this election, Taiwanese politicians that were pro-independence could only take positions within the KMT in order to advance politically. Nevertheless, this was the first election where opposing parties such as the DPP, who had been strongly against the KMT's single party rule and advocated for a separate political and cultural identity from China, were allowed to have representation in a presidential election.

On July 1995, Taiwanese President and KMT candidate Lee Tung-hui privately visited Cornell University to give a commencement speech during his college reunion. The PRC viewed this visit as a challenge to the "One China" principle due to the fact that Lee was given a visa to travel to the U.S., and visas were only issued to countries that were diplomatically recognized. In response to the visit, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted six missile tests in the Taiwan Strait, organized naval and air exercises near Taiwan, and mobilized forces in Fujian, a coastal province of China near Taiwan. The PLA continued their military exercises in the Taiwan Strait from between July and November of 1995, a signal to Lee and Taiwan that any actions to pursue independence would be met with military force (GlobalSecurity, n.d.).

In early March of 1996, a few weeks before the presidential election, the PLA began deploying more troops to Fujian and conducted another series of missile tests; this time, however, the target areas were close to major airline routes, shipping lanes, and major commercial ports in Taiwan. Since Taiwan's economy was heavily dependent on foreign trade at the time, Beijing's missile tests served to disrupt Taiwan's economy and influence the outcome of the election, hoping to steer Taiwanese voters toward pro-reunification candidates. The U.S., which had warned Beijing about its military maneuvers and instructed it to resolve the Taiwan issue peacefully, decided that China's missile tests in the lead up to the election were actions that required American intervention. The Clinton Administration then deployed two carrier battle groups near Taiwan to demonstrate U.S.'s superior naval power and military capabilities, to monitor PLA military exercise, and to signal U.S. commitment to ensuring stability and protecting its interests in the region (Ross 2000, 118-122). American military presence near Taiwan and China was enough to relax tensions in the Taiwan Strait, allowing Taiwan to peacefully carry out its election.

The 1996 Taiwan Presidential Election saw Lee Tung-hui become the first democratically elected president in Taiwan. According to Taiwan's Central Election Commission, KMT's Lee received 54% of the votes and the DPP's Peng received 21.13% of the votes, with a 76.04% total voter turnout. While Lee's democratic reforms and successful economic policies should also be considered for his election victory, the decisive voting outcome revealed that Beijing's attempts to influence the election and to coerce Taiwanese voters backfired. As a result, this election not only shows the political and strategic importance of Taiwan to Beijing and Washington, but more importantly, it affirmed the desired political direction of the Taiwanese population.

## *2000 Taiwanese Presidential Election*

On March 18, 2000, the DPP's Chen Shui-bian won Taiwan's Presidential Election in a closely contested race, the first time a political party other than the KMT assumed presidency. Looking at Taiwan's Central Election Commission reports from the 2000 election, DPP's Chen won 39.3% of the votes, James Soong, running as an independent who was viewed as pro-reunification, received 36.84% of the votes, and the KMT's Lien Chan, the Vice President of Lee Tung-hui, received 23.10% of the votes, with a voter turnout of 82.69%. While the issue of cross-strait relations was still prominent, the candidates in this election, especially the DPP's Chen, took more moderate stances in regards to pro-independence sentiments due to continued Chinese threats against Taiwan if they declared independence. A 2000 report by *The Guardian* details the PRC's policy paper stating that Beijing would use military force unless Taiwanese leaders agreed to start discussions on reunification in the future. Compared to the missile tests and military exercises during the 1996 election, China's issuance of its defense policy paper before the 2000 election was seen as a less aggressive way of influencing the election, this time by increasing pressure on the presidential candidates to reconsider any "pro-independence" rhetoric (Gittings 2000, np).

Chen's small margin of victory, less than three percent, can be attributed to the split in the KMT vote between the independent Soong and the KMT's Lien, which changed the outcome of the election in the opinions of most observers (Copper 2000, 45-46). The candidates' reputations and cross-strait politics also contributed to the outcome of the election, but it is important to note that Chinese intimidation tactics worked to influence the candidates' policies, not voters' decisions. Ultimately, the fact that the losing parties and candidates accepted Chen's presidential victory and Chen expressed a willingness to work with opposition parties

demonstrated that Taiwan's democratic political system could flourish. Thus, the election served to further consolidate Taiwan's democracy, proving that a different political party could peacefully assume power.

#### *2004 Taiwanese Presidential Election*

Taiwan's presidential elections on March 20, 2004 was even more tightly contested than the previous one as the margin of victory was close to 0.2 percent. Taiwan's Central Election Commission shows that the DPP's Chen Shui-bian, who ran as an incumbent, won 50.11% of the votes, while the KMT's Lian Chan received 49.89% of the votes, with a voter turnout of 80.28%. While the PRC reduced its acts of intimidation and coercion prior to the election as past election results have shown that their efforts have been counterproductive, the focus of this election instead was on the challenges to Taiwan's democracy due to the controversies surrounding incidents before the election and the KMT Party challenged the election's results. This election also served to establish the DPP and KMT's main policy positions regarding cross-strait relations. The DPP under Chen looked to temporarily preserve the status quo, while self-determination and independence would be pursued in the future. On the other hand, the KMT led by Lian advocated for maintaining the status quo also, but looked to eventually reunify with Mainland China. As a result, while these issues were clearly defined to the political parties, both took moderate and ambiguous stances toward this issue in order to gain the support of the voters who stood in the middle of this spectrum.

On the day before the presidential election, President Chen Shui-bian and his Vice President Annette Lu were shot while campaigning in Tainan. Fortunately, there were no life-threatening injuries and both were treated and released from the hospital on the same day. When the election outcome revealed that Chen was re-elected, the KMT challenged the results. For

one, they believed that the shooting incident was manufactured by the DPP in order to gain “sympathetic votes” in what was a very close race. The KMT’s Lian tried to negotiate with the DPP for a recount and engage Taiwan’s legal system to nullify the election. However, despite public protests against the election and repeated attempts by the KMT to appeal the election result, the CEC confirmed the re-election (Matsuda 2004, 2-7). In sum, the assassination attempt and the subsequent protests by the KMT presented a setback for Taiwan’s democracy. Nevertheless, while the KMT eventually had to accept the outcome of the election, the fact remains that the Taiwanese population still believed that democracy remained the most effective form of governance.

#### *2008 Taiwanese Presidential Election*

Due to the KMT realization that directly supporting reunification with China would hurt their presidential efforts, they decided to focus their campaign on repairing Taiwan’s economy by boosting economic links and improving relations with China. Further, allegations of government corruption and poor economic performance under former President Chen Shui-bian hurt the DPP’s political image in the election as his approval ratings as president fell significantly. As a result, on March 22, 2008, Taiwan’s Central Election Commission reported that KMT’s Ma Ying-jeou won the Taiwanese Presidential Election with 58.44% of the votes, while the DPP’s Hsieh Chang-ting only received 41.55% of the votes, with a total voter turnout of 76.33%.

The PRC remained distanced before the election and after the election, but their indirect support for the KMT is implied by Ma’s planned policies to improve relations. To win the support of voters in the middle of the Taiwanese political spectrum, Ma articulated the “Three No’s”: no independence, no unification, and no use of force (Bush 2008, np). These policies,

Ma's stated adherence to the 1992 Consensus, and his goal of enhancing economic cooperation with China were seen as major steps toward cross-strait stability, opening a new era of cooperation between the PRC and Taiwan.

### *2012 Taiwanese Presidential Election*

Due to the wide margin of defeat the DPP faced in the 2008 Presidential Election, the DPP under new leader Tsai Ing-wen worked to repair their image to win back the trust and support of the Taiwanese population. Tsai Ing-wen became the first female to run for the Taiwanese presidency, looking to carve a separate identity for Taiwan from China and have the DPP become more progressive on social and economic issues. However, incumbent President Ma's successful development of Taiwan's economy through improved relations with the PRC, including his signing of the Economic Cooperation and Framework Agreement and cross-strait peace, factored into voters' decisions (deLisle 2012, np).

The Taiwanese Presidential Election on January 14, 2012, saw the KMT's President Ma Ying-jeou win 51.6% of votes, while the DPP's Tsai Ing-wen received 45.63% of votes, with a total voter turnout of 74.38%, according to Taiwan's 2012 Central Election Commission. Ma's election victory, albeit by a much narrower margin than in the previous election, revealed the DPP's weaknesses with voters who prioritize economic issues and the possible risks of their policies in regards to cross-strait stability. On the other hand, Ma's re-election showed that many Taiwanese citizens valued his ability to ensure political and economic stability within Taiwan through his policies of improving cross-strait relations and not giving Beijing a timetable regarding reunification.

### *2016 Taiwanese Presidential Election*

On January 16, 2016, the Taiwan Presidential Election was held, with Taiwan's Central Election Commission reporting that the DPP's Tsai Ing-wen won 56.12% of votes, while the KMT's Chu Li-luan received 31.05% of votes. The total voter turnout was 66.27%, the lowest total registered votes since Taiwan held its first direct presidential election. The DPP victory is seen as similar to the KMT's in 2008 when Ma assumed office, where dissatisfaction with certain policies hurt the leaving president's political party. Ma's economic policies toward China and his pursuit of closer relations with the PRC during his second term increased worries about Taiwan's economic dependence on China, which the PRC could use to bring about reunification (Bush 2016, np). For example, a student demonstration known as the Sunflower Student Movement in 2014 saw activists protest the KMT's passing of a trade agreement with China as they believed this pact could potentially hurt Taiwan's economy and leave Taiwan vulnerable to political pressures from Beijing. As a result, the KMT's resounding defeat in the 2016 election serves as evidence of Taiwanese population's concerns with the KMT's cross-strait policies.

Following Tsai's victory, the PRC issued statements that condemned any movement toward independence as they would result in dire consequences for Taiwan, despite Tsai stating throughout her campaign that she would look to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Beijing's statements in response to the election outcome aimed to prevent Tsai from taking any action that disputes China's sovereignty claims over Taiwan. Regardless, through this election, Tsai became the first female president and Taiwan experienced its third transfer of political power, a clear indication of Taiwan's maturity and progress as a democracy.

## **How 2020 Taiwanese Presidential Election Outcome Affects Taiwan-China Relations**

The implications of the result of Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Election hold significance not just for the future of Taiwan's domestic and foreign policies, but also for the People's Republic of China's approach to Taiwan. In my opinion, a Tsai Ing-wen re-election would worsen Taiwan-China relations as President Tsai's administration has pursued policies that aim to gradually give Taiwan more independence from the mainland. The PRC's disapproval of Tsai's election will likely result in increased military activity and further deteriorate their economic relationship, leading to rising tensions and less non-governmental (cultural, educational, etc.) exchanges. In an interview with *The Diplomat*, Bonnie Glaser, a consultant for the US government on East Asia and senior advisor for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, discusses the possibilities for the future of cross-strait relations in the case of a Tsai election victory, outlining three potential scenarios. The best-case scenario would be if Beijing decides to find a new path forward, realizing they must directly deal with Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party government. As a starting point, Beijing would begin talks with the Tsai Administration about reaching an understanding for a new formulation of cross-strait relations other than the 1992 Consensus. In this scenario, Tsai is likely to continue to assert Taiwan's independence, requiring Beijing to make political concessions in regard to Taiwan. However, this scenario is unlikely as the Chinese Communist Party has been adamant in its agenda to reunify Taiwan. Moreover, CCP concessions in this matter will likely trigger independence movements in other regions of China, a possibility that the CCP will certainly not entertain. The second, most realistic scenario would be maintaining the status quo, with Beijing continuing to use military, economic, and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan to pursue its goal of peaceful unification. Tsai's rejection of the One China Principle and rising Taiwanese



nationalism have placed a distance between Taipei and Beijing. As a result, based on historical patterns, Beijing will likely increase its military activity close to Taiwan through missile tests and naval/air exercises in an effort to display its military capabilities and imply its willingness to use force to any independence threats. Economically, China could use many forms of coercion to cause disruption and worry within the Taiwanese economy. According to research by the RAND Corporation, Beijing could employ export, import, financial, and investment sanctions that would hurt production, sales, and employment on Taiwan. China, as it has in the past, could use selective threats and harassment through foreign exchange controls to discourage support for DPP policies by Taiwanese businesspeople, many of whom carry out trade and investment activities in the mainland (Tanner 2007, 17-19). China has also looked to marginalize Taiwan's economy by developing Chinese sectors that could compete and supplant key Taiwanese businesses, which would decrease Taiwan's importance and independence in the international economy. In perhaps China's most notable strategy of undermining Taiwan's sovereignty, Beijing could intensify its diplomatic pressure by poaching Taiwan's remaining diplomatic allies through economic coercion to isolate Taiwan in the international arena. For example, on September 19, 2019, the Solomon Islands switched its diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing with China offering \$8.5 billion in development funds to break relations with Taiwan. China has also ensured that Taiwan is kept from participating in international organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization. The third scenario, also the worst case, would involve the PRC resorting to military force to compel Taiwan to reunify. However, this scenario is unlikely in the near term as Glaser notes that the decision to use military force would ultimately be driven by internal factors in the mainland. Furthermore, Tsai has been known to cautiously approach Taiwan's political issue as to avoid provoking Beijing. Tsai has

toed the line of continuing to maintain Taiwan's independent status while not advocating for formal independence from China. (Tiezzi, Zhang, and La Terza 2019). As a result, Tsai has worked to position Taiwan's future with the more rule-based international order in order to receive the support from countries such as the United States.

Based on the Kuomintang's affiliation with the CCP and Beijing's support for Han's candidacy, the election of Han will likely improve Taiwan-China relations but to a limited extent. The economic and diplomatic relationships are likely to improve most, but due to increasing Taiwanese nationalism and public fears that the CCP will look to undermine Taiwan's democracy, a resolution regarding Taiwan's political status will likely continue to stall. Bonnie Glaser also considers the consequences of a Han Kuo-yu victory, noting that while some aspects of cross-strait relations might improve, there would be certain limitations. Cross-strait relations would progress economically as Han's campaign centers on the need to pursue a more interconnected economic relationship with China, allowing for more cross-strait dialogue on negotiations for economic agreements. Han's election is likely to draw more trade and tourists from China, allowing many Taiwanese businesses increased access to Chinese markets. However, Han's need to appeal to Taiwanese voters who are numb on the idea of reunification has put him at odds with Beijing. For example, Han has stated that there will not be cross-strait peace discussions unless Beijing renounces the use of force. Furthermore, Han's desire to leave the issue of the politics of cross-strait relations to the next generation is a direct contradiction to Chairman Xi's wish to address problems in the cross-strait relations during his tenure. Nevertheless, Han is without a doubt Beijing's preferred candidate as the KMT's political agenda focuses on pursuing closer ties to China. So while Han's election could pose minor political hurdles in regards to Taiwan's legitimacy, Han's insistence on improving cross-strait

economic relations could lead to a greater dependence on China that could pave a path for reunification.

## CHAPTER III

### TAIWAN-US RELATIONS

#### **Historical Background of Taiwan-US Relations**

##### *Taiwan Relations Act (1979)*

Due to the obstacle that Taiwan presented for the normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China, President Jimmy Carter decided to switch diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing on January 1979, thus establishing formal relations with the PRC and recognizing Beijing as the sole government of China. In the aftermath, U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), which according to a U.S. Congress conference report in 1979, "declares it to be the policy of the United States to preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan." The conference report further states "that the United States decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means" and "that the United States shall provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character and shall maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan" (H.R. 2479, 1979).

This legislation serves as a unique strategic solution due to the fact that it allows the US to protect its significant security and commercial interests in Taiwan and Asia by continuing substantive, unofficial relations with Taiwan, while also allowing for diplomatic relations with the PRC (Yates 1999, np). Moreover, since the PRC did not rule out the use of force against

Taiwan, the TRA provided the Taiwanese population a certain sense of peace due to uncertainty about Taiwan's political future and cross-strait stability. However, since the TRA is not a treaty but a law, the language regarding the defense of Taiwan is ambiguous. The TRA leaves open the possibility of US intervention in the case of non-peaceful steps by Beijing, but it does not require the US to do so, allowing the acting President and Congress to determine decisions about the extent and nature of US defense for Taiwan. To further ensure the safety and security of Taiwan, the TRA allows the US to sell arms to Taiwan, providing Taiwan with a sufficient self-defense that aims to deter acts of PRC aggression toward Taiwan. Another demonstration of US commitment to Taiwan was the establishment of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) on January 1979, which acts as the de facto embassy that serves the United States diplomatic mission of bolstering bilateral economic and cultural ties, although in a quasi-official manner.

In 1982, the United States agreed to a proposal by the Taiwanese government that offered six points as guidelines to US-Taiwan Relations: 1) The US would not set a date for termination of arms sales to Taiwan, 2) The United States would not alter the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act, 3) The United States would not consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, 4) The United States would not mediate between Taiwan and China, 5) The United States would not alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan which was, that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China, 6) The United States would not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan (Taiwan Documents Project, np). The US attempted to balance accommodating Beijing's objections to the Taiwan Relations Act and defending Taiwanese autonomy. As a result, before the Third Joint Communiqué between the PRC and US, President Reagan reaffirmed the Six Assurances as the guiding policy for relations

with Taiwan, but agreed to gradually reduce arm sales to Taiwan. The Reagan Administration stated that it had no interest in taking a position on whether independence, reunification or another status should be the ultimate goal; instead, it was mainly concerned that any resolution would be conducted under peaceful means and looked to ensure the balance of forces across the strait (Feldman 2007, np).

#### *1994 Taiwan Policy Review*

Due to the broad and ambiguous framework of the Taiwan Relations Act, each US administration is allowed to formulate its own strategy for conducting relations with Taiwan. In June 1994, President Bill Clinton summarized his administration's policy toward Taiwan in Shanghai in what is known as the "Three No's," publicly stating "we don't support independence for Taiwan, or two Chinas, or one Taiwan--one China. And we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member of any organization for which statehood is a requirement" (Yates 1998, np). This statement caused commotion in the United States and Taiwan as it aligned more with Beijing's position, a position that past U.S. administrations had refused to endorse. During this time in the early 1990s, Taiwan was becoming more of a democracy and was the U.S.'s sixth largest trading partner, developments that U.S. policymakers recognized as important to U.S. values and interests. On September 1994, President Clinton initiated a comprehensive review of U.S. policy towards Taiwan, working toward adjusting its Taiwan strategy that aligned more with U.S. interests. In this review, the Clinton Administration sought to strengthen unofficial ties with Taiwan by allowing top-level Taiwanese officials transits in the U.S. under approved conditions, however they could not engage in public activities while in the U.S.. The policy allowed for cabinet level dialogue on economic and technical matters, while also permitting U.S. officials to meet with Taiwan's president, vice president, and foreign ministers in official settings.

Furthermore, the U.S. would support Taiwan's membership in international organizations where non-states could be accepted as members (Virella 2017, np).

### *Taiwan-US Relations under the Trump Administration*

Past American administrations, including the Bush and Obama administrations have been consistent in maintaining a political distance in regards to their approach to Taiwan policy in order to ensure stable relations with Beijing. However, the Trump Administration has considerably diverged from decades of this conservative diplomatic practice. Following his 2016 Presidential victory, President Trump accepted a congratulatory phone call from President Tsai Ing-wen, the first time an American president has directly spoken with a Taiwanese president since 1979. Perhaps due to President Trump's appointment of "Taiwan-friendly" personnel within the Department of State and Department of Defense, the U.S. has made efforts to increase its support of Taiwan both diplomatically and militarily. In March 2018, President Trump signed into law the Taiwan Travel Act, which according to a U.S. Congressional report, "[encourages] visits between the United States and Taiwan at all levels," lifting unofficial restrictions to high-level official exchanges. In the same year, the U.S. spent \$250 million to upgrade its de facto embassy (AIT) in Taiwan (H.R. 535, 2017). The U.S. has backed Taiwan in disputes over diplomatic recognition; for example, the U.S. has re-evaluated its financial assistance for both Kiribati and the Solomon Islands after they switched their from Taipei to Beijing. On the military side, in 2019, President Trump authorized the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan, an arms deal worth \$8 billion that significantly upgrades Taiwan's military defense. There has also been an increase of U.S. military ships sailing through the Taiwan Strait, a move that aligns with the Trump Administration's renewed focus on Asia as articulated by the U.S. Department of Defense's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision" report. Nevertheless, while

the Trump Administration's policies toward Taiwan could be viewed under a U.S. strategic agenda of confronting China's emergence as a global power, these policies have certainly deepened and strengthened the U.S. diplomatic and security relationship with Taiwan.

### **How 2020 Taiwanese Presidential Election Outcome Affects Taiwan-US Relations**

My claim is that a Tsai Ing-wen re-election indicates that the Taiwanese population would not want reunification with China and prefers to strengthen Taiwan-U.S. relations. Tsai is clearly the U.S.'s preferred candidate as evidenced by her unprecedented stays in the U.S. and increased exchanges with U.S. officials during her first presidential term. Furthermore, the Trump Administration's increasing diplomatic and military support for Taiwan are advancements within the Taiwan-U.S. relationship that signal a possible shift in U.S. policy. As a result, the U.S.-Taiwan relationship is likely to improve economically, militarily, and diplomatically. Taiwan and the U.S. already enjoy a strong economic relationship; according to the Export.gov and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. is Taiwan's second largest trading partner and Taiwan is the U.S.'s eleventh largest trading partner (Export.gov 2019; United States Trade Representative, np). This economic relationship is likely to strengthen even further if Tsai is re-elected due to her goal of shifting Taiwan's economic dependence on China. Tsai's stated economic goal and Taiwan's importance within the U.S. technology sector, along with the Trump Administration's increasing national security concerns regarding China's intellectual property theft sets a strategic opportunity for deepening economic relations. Tsai has also pushed for a U.S.-Taiwan bilateral trade agreement, which would certainly worsen relations for both the U.S. and Taiwan with China, but would allow Tsai to more successfully implement her New Southbound Policy plan and "promote security and economic growth for both the United States and Taiwan" (Kao 2020, np). Due to Tsai's statements regarding Taiwan's



independent status, China has increased its military presence around the Taiwan Strait. The U.S. has notably been aware of this and has also increased its naval activity in the Taiwan Strait and looked to strengthen Taiwan's defense capabilities as evidenced by U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Such arm sales also align with the U.S. Department of Defense strategy of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific," which I will discuss more of in the next chapter. A Tsai re-election could strengthen the security and military relationship between the U.S. and Taiwan through a more integrated bilateral military strategy and defense cooperation that would serve both their goals of deterring Chinese military aggression. Diplomatically, Tsai's re-election could lead to more frequent high-level official exchanges between the U.S. and Taiwan. The passing of the Taiwan Travel Act has seen U.S. officials such as Senator Ted Cruz attend Taiwan's National Day celebration in Taipei and Trump's former national security advisor, John Bolton, meeting with one of Taiwan's top defense officials, David Lee, in the White House. The number of supporters of Taiwan in the U.S. Congress should also enhance diplomacy between U.S. and Taiwanese officials, serving Tsai's goal of increasing Taiwan's diplomatic recognition. In sum, it is important not to overlook how the Trump Administration has helped Tsai in responding to Chinese military, economic, and diplomatic pressure. Due to improved Taiwan-U.S. relations during Tsai's first term, there is evidence to support that a Tsai re-election would further strengthen Taiwan-U.S. relations as Tsai's hard-line policies towards China align with U.S. interests in its strategic competition with China.

Due to the lack of scholarly research on Han Kuo-yu's policies, implications of his election for Taiwan-U.S. relations must be analyzed by examining his policies towards China and how they affect U.S. interests. In this sense, a Han election would worsen Taiwan-U.S. relations due to his plan to strengthen ties with Beijing. Han's visit with senior Chinese officials

in China and his decision to not meet with U.S. officials during his presidential campaign, a recommended procedure for Taiwanese presidential candidates, further clarified his position with regard to the U.S. While Han has stated he values Taiwan-U.S. ties, the implementation of his campaign promises would increase links with China, which would make relations with the U.S. less necessary. While Han has stated he values Taiwan-U.S. ties, the implementation of his campaign promises are likely to increase links with China, which could result in diminished relations with the U.S. (Kurlantzick 2019, np). Under the previous KMT president, Ma Ying-jeou, Taiwan saw closer economic ties and a warm relationship with the PRC, goals that the Obama Administration supported to ensure cross-strait peace. However, Obama's foreign policy conformed more to Beijing's political positions, which is in contrast to the Trump Administration's policies toward China. As a result, past evidence of a KMT candidate and how it affects Taiwan's relations with the U.S. would not be accurate in assessing the implications of Han's election victory for the U.S. since China has become stronger both militarily and economically, and concerns over these developments has caused the Trump Administration to change the U.S. approach towards China. In conclusion, while a Han election would not erode Taiwan-U.S. relations as both are still vital economic partners with strong historic ties, closer Taiwan-China relations would likely weaken Taiwan-U.S. relations by giving the PRC more leverage over the U.S. in their global power competition.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHINA-US RELATIONS

#### **Historical Background of China-US Relations**

##### *1<sup>st</sup> Joint Communiqué (1972)*

Despite frozen relations and major conflicts between the U.S. and the PRC during the Korean War, Taiwan Strait Crises, and the Vietnam War, the deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union and the PRC in the early 1960s opened a geostrategic opportunity for the United States to change the power balance during the Cold War. As a result, the U.S. decided it was in their best interest to improve relations with Beijing, shifting from decades of confrontation to a new era of negotiation and cooperation.

On February 1972, the PRC's Prime Minister/Premier, Zhou En-lai, invited President Richard Nixon and his American officials to Shanghai to discuss working toward the normalization of U.S.-China diplomatic relations and to address issues regarding Taiwan. During the weeklong visit, American and Chinese leaders exchanged their views on a variety of international issues. The sides agreed to a set of principles that served to guide and expand their relationship; "progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interests of all countries, both wish to reduce the danger of international conflict, neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony, and neither is prepared to negotiate on behalf of any third party or to enter into agreements or understandings with the other directed at other states" (Watson Institute for International Studies 2019, 1-5). These agreements were significant to how both the U.S. and PRC would approach international

relations in the future, but the issue of Taiwan's sovereignty remained an obstacle in which both sides had their own views on the best way to settle it. The PRC emphasized that Taiwan was a "crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere." The U.S., remaining in a position of neutrality, declared that "[it] acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, np). Furthermore, enhanced cultural exchanges and better economic relations were areas both sides understood as mutually beneficial and essential to achieving progress and stability. The successful discussion and interchange of both Chinese and American positions on world and regional affairs during this historic meeting cemented belief that future prospects of U.S.-PRC relations were indeed possible, thus paving a path toward the normalization of relations.

#### *2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Communiqué (1979)*

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1979, the U.S. agreed to formally recognize the PRC as the sole government of China, resulting in the establishment of formal, diplomatic relations. PRC leader Deng Xiaoping visited Washington D.C. and met with U.S. President Jimmy Carter to sign the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. This agreement meant that the U.S. would end diplomatic relations with the Republic of China, prompting the U.S. to terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty and withdraw its military forces from the island. During this visit,

both U.S. and PRC leaders also reaffirmed the principles from the previous Joint Communiqué, and agreed to exchange ambassadors and establish embassies.

### *3<sup>rd</sup> Joint Communiqué (1982)*

On August 1982, U.S. President Ronald Reagan traveled to Shanghai to meet with PRC leader Li Xiannian. Both sides expressed a desire to further enhance relations, strengthening economic, cultural, educational, scientific, and technological ties (Wang 2018, np). However, due to the Reagan Administration passing the “Six Assurances” to Taiwan before the visit, PRC leaders were concerned over U.S. arm sales to Taiwan and attached great importance to this issue. As a result, while the meeting did not conclude in a consensus over the issue of arms sales to Taiwan, both sides intentionally offered different interpretations of its policy toward Taiwan. Within this agreement, the U.S. understood that the reduction of arm sales to Taiwan was contingent on the PRC pursuing a peaceful resolution toward Taiwan. Meanwhile, the PRC’s understanding was that the U.S. would continue to respect PRC’s sovereignty and not interfere within their internal affairs, while gradually reducing arm sales to Taiwan. The “malleability” of this agreement was intended to allow both sides to pursue their respective policy towards Taiwan, while highlighting their different positions regarding arm sales. As a result, this communiqué was significant in that it allowed the U.S. and PRC to come to a certain level of mutual understanding on an issue, but more importantly, it enabled both sides to advance their relationship and broaden areas of cooperation (U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, np).

### *US-China Relations Act of 2000*

In the 1980s, China under PRC leader Deng Xiaoping modernized China’s struggling economy by shifting away from centralized planning and state ownership, instead focusing on

encouraging foreign investment and trade, private entrepreneurship, and privatization. These market-oriented reforms were significant in causing a rapid growth of trade between the two nations. Since 1980, free trade with China was subject to an annual review by U.S. Congress on whether to grant China the “Most Favored Nation (MFN)” status, meaning low tariffs and less trade barriers. The annual reviews gave members of U.S. Congress the opportunity to express concerns over the PRC’s human rights issues, such as the Tiananmen Square Incident, and criticisms over their socialist political system. However, the sitting U.S. President could issue a waiver that granted China the MFN status. As president, Bill Clinton signed the U.S.-China Relations Act of 2000, which removed the annual reviews by Congress, granting China permanent trade relations status (NTR) with the United States and paving the way for China to become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

With China becoming the world’s sixth largest economy by 2000, President Clinton’s motivation for passing this act stems from his desire for China to further liberalize its economy to U.S. businesses and investments by reducing tariffs and trade barriers, as China was rapidly growing economically and had a massive consumer market due to its large population. Furthermore, President Clinton believed that China’s entry into the WTO would force the PRC to conform more to an American-based liberal and democratic order and speed up its transition to a market economy, as China would have a greater global stake through increased global integration. The Clinton Administration ultimately operated under the assumption that free trade would lead to democracy, thereby pursuing American economic and national interests (Council on Foreign Relations, np). However, due to the rapid growth and successes of China’s economy following their entrance into the WTO, the Chinese Communist Party was able to implement

political and government reforms that further legitimized their rule. As a result, the CCP's grip over China has tightened, opposite what the Clinton Administration had hoped.

*U.S.-China Relations Under Chairman Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump*

Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, he and the Chinese Communist Party have looked to increase China's presence globally, undertaking political, military, and economic reforms. According to Elizabeth Economy, a director for Asian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Chairman Xi has centralized his power within the PRC, expanded the CCP's role in Chinese political, economic, and social life with the goal of internal stability, and implemented more regulations that control the exchange of ideas and capital between China and the rest of the world (Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, np). Furthermore, China under Xi has seen military modernization, increased military activities in the South and East China Sea, de-liberalization of its economy, and expansion of China's global economic influence through projects such as the Belt and Road Initiative that serves the PRC goal of ultimately becoming the international superpower. According to The World Bank and the Global Firepower Index, China has the world's second largest economy and the world's third most powerful military in 2020 (The World Bank 2019; GlobalFirePower 2020).

U.S. Administrations before Trump's presidency have taken a cautious approach to dealing with China's growing political and economic influence, with the hope that these developments and increased cooperation would gradually push China to embrace American-like domestic governance and shared values. However, since Donald Trump became U.S. President in 2016, he has changed U.S. policy towards China, adopting "an increasingly zero-sum, unilateralist, protectionist, and nativist 'America first' approach to the relationship" as a response to China's "discriminatory trade barriers, forced technology transfer, militarization of outposts in

the South China Sea, pressure on Taiwan, human rights and religious freedom [violations], government-sponsored cyber-enabled economic espionage, and Chinese interference in other countries' political systems" (Dollar, Hass, and Bader 2019, np). These are concerns that the Trump Administrations viewed were responsible for China's rapid emergence as a global power. The Trump Administration's reformed approach to China is evident within changes to U.S.'s economic policy, increased military spending, and focus on the Indo-Pacific that aims to curb what it views as unfair and aggressive CCP behavior.

Aside from issues relating to Taiwan, U.S.-China relations have considerably worsened under the Trump Administration as they have taken a confrontational strategy toward Chairman Xi and the CCP. The U.S.-China Trade War, starting in 2018, Chinese cyber security threats, and conflicting military and defense agendas provide some examples of how the U.S.-China relationship has soured. The U.S.-China trade war started due to the Trump Administration taking issue with the U.S. trade deficit with China, unfair trade practices, and intellectual property theft, prompting President Trump to impose tariffs and other trade barriers on China. In response, China denied the Trump Administration's accusations and claimed these practices were intended to slow China's rise as an economic power, retaliating with its own tariffs on U.S. goods and tighter restrictions on trade. While both sides still will look to reach a deal, the economic measures and policies taken by the U.S. and China can be understood as steps taken to protect their respective interests. The trade war, and the US steps in particular, could indicate a U.S. realization that the gap in economic power is rapidly shrinking. The Trump Administration has also taken a confrontational stance towards cyber security threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party. For example, American officials such as Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defense Mark Esper raised issues with Huawei, a Chinese telecommunications



company, as a U.S. national security threat. The primary concern is that Huawei has close ties to the Chinese Communist Party and that its 5G networks could give the Chinese Communist Party unauthorized access to spy on foreign governments, compromising a nation's government, corporate, and military secrets. Moreover, the PRC's increased military spending, which according to *Investopedia* saw an eighty-three percent increase from 2009 to 2018, leaves it second to the United States, and has created major global security worries within the U.S (Floyd 2019, np). In response to China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) increasing its military activity in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait to protect and expand its economic and political interests, the Trump Administration has detailed new initiatives in Asia, conveyed by the U.S. Department of Defense "Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision" strategy report. According to Bonnie Glaser, a consultant for the US government on East Asia and senior advisor for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the report express four goals for U.S. strategy in the Indo-Pacific: "respect for sovereignty and independence of all nations; peaceful resolution of disputes; free, fair, and reciprocal trade based on open investment, transparent agreements, and connectivity; and adherence to international law, including freedom of navigation and overflight" (Tiezzi, Zhang, and La Terza 2019). This strategy serves to oppose China's goal of becoming a regional hegemon in the Asia-Pacific, especially in the South China Sea, one of the world's most important waterways due to its strategic economic and geopolitical importance. China has had territorial disputes with neighbors such as Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Phillipines as it looks to assert control in this region by constructing military infrastructure, building artificial islands, and deploying defense systems. Due to the harmful economic and security implications of Chinese hegemony in the region for the U.S. and its allies, the U.S. Department of Defense looks to keep the South China Sea as free

to international waters by increasing U.S. military activity in the Indo-Pacific, thus maintaining a regional balance that is favorable to U.S. security relationships and interests. Nonetheless, despite economic and military disputes, the U.S. and China can still cooperate in areas where their interests align while maneuvering for an edge in their competition for regional control.

### **How 2020 Taiwanese Presidential Election Outcome Affects China-US Relations**

My argument is that a Tsai Ing-wen re-election or a Han Kuo-yu election is likely to worsen U.S.-China relations, meaning that no matter the election outcome, prospects for improvement of U.S.-China relations is unlikely. Both the U.S. and China hold a strategic stake in Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Election, one that would either boost or hinder their strategic interests within the context of the U.S.-China power competition. While the U.S. has long prioritized cross-strait stability and a peaceful resolution to Taiwan's disputed status, at present President Tsai Ing-wen is an important ally for the U.S. in its economic and defense power struggle with China. In the face of the U.S.-China Trade War, the U.S. has largely turned to Taiwan for its technology hardware manufacturing exports due to the trade barriers with China and the Trump Administration's concerns over Chinese intellectual property theft. Taiwan's increased defense capabilities have also contributed to the Trump Administration's goal of deterring Chinese military aggression in the Taiwan Strait. The DPP's shared democratic values and defensive strategic goals also would mean a ideological victory for the United States over China. On the other hand, China's support for Han Kuo-yu's candidacy implies how his election victory would advance PRC interests. His party, the Kuomintang (KMT), affiliates itself with the Chinese Communist Party and thus generally looks to increase ties with China, especially economically. Han's goal of closer economic links and greater economic dependence with China could accelerate a path towards reunification, even though the majority of the Taiwanese

population would oppose it. In this case, especially if China uses military force to pursue reunification, U.S.-China relations will surely deteriorate as the U.S. has long stated that any means to reunify would have to involve peace, possibly prompting American intervention in Taiwan. If the PRC finds a peaceful resolution with Taiwan, U.S.-China relations would not be significantly hurt, although U.S. and their allies' strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific would take a blow. Ultimately, it is hard to say what a Han election victory would mean for U.S.-China relations, but given the competitive and confrontational approach the Trump Administration has taken toward the PRC, an improvement in relations seems unlikely.

In conclusion, it seems fitting to label Tsai as the “pro-U.S.” candidate and Han the “pro-China” candidate given their planned policies and the support their respective party receives from the two nations. Due to the historic and cultural ties Taiwan has with both the U.S. and China, the outcome of the 2020 Taiwan Presidential Election could determine the future political direction of Taiwan and which global power it aligns itself with. As a result, the future of U.S.-China relations could face challenges due to the strategic and political importance of Taiwan for both nations. It is hard to determine what actions each side will take in response to the outcome of the election, but based on historical evidence between the U.S. and China and the state of relations between the Trump Administration and Xi's Chinese Communist Party, increased competition economically, militarily, and for global political influence seems to be the most realistic consequence.

## CONCLUSION

These analyses serve to provide a greater understanding of how presidential elections do not just affect the domestic policies of the nations holding the election, but they have broader implications that can be felt across the world. As the world becomes more interconnected, it is important to realize how the foreign policy of one country can influence the domestic and foreign policies of another country. In examining Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Election, I am demonstrating how the election outcome does not just affect Taiwan's relations with the U.S. and China, but also U.S.-China relations. Since the U.S. and China have increasingly clashed as China has evolved into a global power, strategic events such as national elections in geopolitically-significant countries should be emphasized to recognize possible shifts in the U.S.-China rivalry dynamics.

While these scenarios are based on recent developments and the stated agendas of the U.S. and China, they intend to give a sense of what improved or worse relations means within the Taiwan-China-U.S. relationship. In this case, I would argue that Tsai's re-election helps and further advances the U.S. goal of global democracy. Taiwan and the U.S. share democratic values and support for freedom and human rights, which should be further promoted and protected. As a result, my claim is that better Taiwan-U.S. relations would not only help Taiwan diplomatically, economically, and politically, but also ultimately serves U.S. interests in maintaining an American-led liberal and stable international order.

My hope is that this research will open new doors that motivate scholars to look more broadly at how shifts in governments or parties can affect a country's relations with the outside world. For instance, South Korea's Presidential Election in 2022 is worth monitoring,

considering their close relations with both the U.S. and China. The impact of South Korea's election outcomes could demonstrate what I have found in Taiwan's 2020 Presidential Election: that both U.S. and China have their own respective relationships with South Korea, which means that a certain candidate winning could have considerable implications for South Korea's relationship with both global powers, but especially for the U.S.-China relationship.

Accordingly, a global power competition raises the importance of foreign policy decisions of every ally or foe, highlighting the far-reaching international consequences national elections can have.

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