

I. Title

From dependency to independence: How the United States supports the Taiwanese military in defending against a potential Chinese invasion

II. Background

Since the inauguration of President Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan, the relationship between Taiwan and the United States has flourished, reaching what many consider to be the pinnacle of their historical alliance. In contrast, China, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, has adopted a domestic policy characterized by nationalistic authoritarianism and an external approach marked by territorial expansionism, forcibly annexing ambiguous maritime regions with its military superiority. Taiwan, which China views as a renegade province, has not been exempt from these pressures. Xi Jinping has openly declared his intention to resolve the "Taiwan issue" during his tenure, emphasizing that the reunification with Taiwan is a necessary condition for the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." Concerning the manner of such a reunification, he has not ruled out the use of military force against Taiwan.

III. Objective

This study aims to delve deeply into the policies and military capacities of the United States and Taiwan, examining the extent to which the U.S. can assist Taiwan's defense against a potential invasion by the People's Liberation Army.

IV. Methodology

I will undertake extensive literature reviews, summarizing key findings for thematic and comparative analysis. By leveraging a diverse set of sources, I aim to understand policy from multiple angles: government bills and reports will shed light on policy trajectories; academic journals will provide forward-looking perspectives influencing policy formulation; and contemporary news will offer insights into policy execution and international reactions. While primarily qualitative in nature, I will also seek to incorporate quantitative data where relevant, aiming to accurately gauge the efficacy and impact of specific policies.

V. Results

1. The United States continues to support Taiwan's self-defense through arms sales and, for the first time in 2023, initiated direct military aid. This signifies that even without formal diplomatic relations, the U.S. now perceives Taiwan

as an ally.

2. Taiwan's military, having not engaged in combat for a significant time and burdened by a strong hierarchical culture, raises doubts about its combat readiness. However, the U.S. military is actively training Taiwanese forces. The short-term goal is to equip Taiwan's military to resist a decapitation strike by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), while the long-term objective is to train Taiwan's armed forces to support U.S. military operations in regional conflicts.
3. If the U.S. decides to militarily intervene during a PLA invasion of Taiwan, there's a high likelihood that Taiwan could repel the PLA's advances. However, both Taiwan and the U.S. would face significant casualties.
4. Given Taiwan's island geography, it would confront military blockades during conflict, leading to supply shortages. Consequently, stockpiling defense materials, including ammunition, is crucial for Taiwan's defense. The U.S. plans to utilize funds allocated for Taiwan to establish military supply storage facilities on the island, to be accessed during wartime.
5. The U.S. believes that Taiwan adopting an "asymmetric" defense strategy would deter PLA aggression. However, there's a divergence in how Taiwan's military and the U.S. understand asymmetric warfare, leading to conflicts in opinion. Sensing the urgency, the U.S. employs a combination of arms sales and military aid, persuading Taiwan to adopt an asymmetric strategy that aligns with U.S. perceptions, rather than spending its limited defense budget on expensive weaponry that might not be survivable in combat.

VI. Conclusion

Assistance from the U.S. can substantially enhance the combat capabilities, resolve, and resilience of Taiwan's armed forces, inflicting significant damage on an invading PLA. With the PLA anticipating a prolonged conflict when attacking Taiwan, China might be unwilling to risk long-term global isolation for the invasion.

In the short run, the U.S. aims to curb China's expansion, especially preventing an occupation of Taiwan. The long-term goal is to establish an Indo-Pacific defense organization, designed to contain strategic adversaries within the Indo-Pacific realm. For Taiwan, being a member of such a defense

organization would inherently secure its safety. With both nations sharing similar values, their bilateral relationship can continue to flourish. Under intentional U.S. guidance, Taiwan's military can progressively evolve into forces adeptly suited for modern warfare.