

# A Trial on the Current Situation of Cross-Strait Relations, Whether the Issue May Evolve from Friction to War

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**Abstract.** This essay focuses on the current state of cross-strait relations and whether the issue may evolve from friction to war. In 2022, after Russia declared war on Ukraine, the world is again in the shadow of war, and cross-strait relations have been a powder keg in the international community. Taiwan, as a country with its legislature, political party and complete state system, but not recognized by the international community. It has long been at odds with the PRC, which claimed Taiwan as part of its own. Since the KMT stepped down and the DPP took power in 2016, Tsai Ing-wen (Taiwan's de facto leader) has denied the 1992 Consensus, and with Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, increasing friction in cross-strait relations, and PLA air forces operating across the centre line of the strait, there is growing concern among the world's population that cross-strait relations will break down and degenerate into war. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the possibility of cross-strait relations from mutual condemnation to actual conflict in terms of the history of cross-strait relations, the current development of Taiwan and China, and the attitudes of the aborigines on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. It also discusses the current situation of cross-strait relations, the future development of the two places, and the attitudes of several Taiwanese and mainlanders toward the cross-strait conflict.

## 1 Introduction

Cross-strait relations are an intricate issue. Taiwan is an island off the southern coast of China with a population of 23 million. The People's Republic of China (PRC) regards the island as a province. However, Taiwan - a region with its own elected government, legislature and passport - does not share the PRC's views, so mainland China and Taiwan maintain a tenuous relationship. Taiwan is physically independent but has never declared independence, and the PRC has declared Taiwan a part of itself but does not have jurisdiction over it. As a result, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have maintained a fragile and stable state, despite occasional friction. However, this state of affairs shifted dramatically in 2022, when relations between the PRC and Taiwan dropped to their lowest point nearly two decades after Pelosi visited Taiwan. Everyone had to consider the possibility of war [1].

## 2 Controversy over cross-strait issues

Cross-strait relations have long been a sensitive topic. Most people describe cross-strait relations as going to war, and most Chinese scholars are convinced that one country, two systems are the optimal solution to the Taiwan issue and that taking Taiwan under the jurisdiction of the PRC would bring a better future for Taiwan. A common perception is that scholars believe that risks and challenges and uncertainty and instability have increased.

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The mainland will thoroughly implement the Party's overall strategy for solving the Taiwan issue in the new era and the Party Central Committee's decisions and plans for Taiwan, improve the policy of sharing development opportunities with Taiwan compatriots on the mainland and implementing equal treatment, and provide more suitable conditions for Taiwan's grassroots and youth groups to participate in cross-strait exchanges and cooperation. (Su Meixiang Lin Zhongwei, 2021) Moreover, he believes there must be a war between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. China will retake Taiwan by force[2].

## 3 PRC's management system is challenging to be recognized by the mainstream society in Taiwan

I conducted interviews with ten people from China and Taiwan. To avoid homogenising their ideas, I selected ten people from different social classes, in different developed regions, and with different levels of education. I ask them about their personal views on cross-strait issues. At the same time, I will anonymously interview two staff members who work with the Chinese system and Taiwanese civil servants, asking them to articulate and express their views on some of the government's decisions as part of the state apparatus. They provided many different values and opinions (see Figure 1, the map of Taiwan Providence). At the same time, I collected many data to make comparisons. For example, the economic compari-

son of regions with one country, two systems, and the press freedom index [3].



Figure 1: the map of Taiwan Providence (scnnc.com) Non-Commercial Use

## 4 Research results

### 4.1 The Failure of One Country, Two Systems

The PRC proposed "one country, two systems" to the Taiwan government, and the PRC promised to give Taiwan a status similar to that of Hong Kong and Macau. The PRC promised to give Taiwan a status similar to that of Hong Kong and Macau, which would allow the Taiwan Special Administrative Region to handle its own cultural, economic, foreign and defence affairs and formulate international trade policies and would allow the Taiwan government to retain its powers, not to dissolve the public opinion organs established in Taiwan, to participate in groups such as the WHO, and to retain a limited military. Deng Xiaoping first proposed this idea in 1980. (Taiwan proposal of "one country, two systems" -

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (wikipedia.org) 1, 2, 3, 4). However, after the implementation of "one country, two systems", Hong Kong has not experienced the "sustained economic growth" and "unchanged status" that was expected at the beginning. HK's press freedom ranking also dropped from 18 in 1988 to 69. HK people's confidence in "one country, two systems" rose from 42.3% in 1988 to a peak of nearly 75% in 2007 but continued to decline until 47.5% in 2015 (you can draw a picture of the changes in Hong Kong over the past 20 years after the handover from the data (udn.com)). The difference, however, is that most of the scholars had an optimistic attitude at the beginning of the handover; they did not believe that one country, two systems would lead to the weakening of Hong Kong, and they also believed that one country, two systems would lead Hong Kong's economy to prosperity. (c41-970415p.pm (cuhk.edu.hk)). However, as more than two decades passed, the facts did

not turn out as they had imagined. 2019 saw the launch of the world-famous anti-China delivery campaign. The opposition movement thus evolved into a social movement at the end of May. This march was the first major march of the social movement. On the same day, rallies were held in 29 overseas cities in solidarity. There was a widespread backlash against excessive police force on that day. On June 15, the legislative amendment was suspended. (Guarding Hong Kong against the "Send China" march - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (wikipedia.org) 22, 23, 24) This movement shattered many people's illusions about one country, two systems and showed that the PRC would not stick to its promise of one country, two systems. It breaks the principle of "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong". In fact, after 2019, the PRC's interference in HK law is getting deeper and deeper. This makes more and more people doubt whether the PRC will follow the basic principles of "being able to handle cultural, economic, foreign and defence affairs and formulate international trade policies on its own, and allowing the Taiwan government to continue to retain power, not to dissolve the public opinion organs set up in Taiwan, to be able to participate in groups such as the WHO, and to retain the military on a limited basis," when applying "one country, two systems" to Taiwan. "These are the basic principles. Meanwhile, according to the questionnaire survey, while 84% of mainlanders believe that "one country, two systems" will have a positive impact on Taiwan, only 34% of Hong Kong people and 19% of Taiwanese people, proving that Hong Kong and Taiwanese people have generally lost confidence in the "one country, two systems" policy. Taiwanese do not believe that "one country, two systems" will bring economic development to Taiwan. Taiwanese said in an interview, "I did not have confidence in one country, two systems, after the riots in HK again in 2019, we lost confidence in one country, two systems, I think PRC attaches much more importance to one country than two systems. The PRC did not maintain the promise of two systems in HK; they withdrew many freedoms and democratic rights of HK; for example, Hong Kong people govern Hong Kong people. Moreover, HK's economy has been declining, so I do not trust that the mainland is one country, two systems will bring room for economic development and a better political environment for Taiwan, and I would prefer Taiwan and the mainland to maintain the status quo than to be governed by the PRC [4].

Moreover, in interviews with mainland civil servants, they also said that the process of one country and two systems would go to the expense of economic benefits to maintain stability.

I think the PRC attaches much more importance to social and regime stability than politics. This year's epidemic prevention and control can show that PRC would give up its economic advantage over Shanghai rather than maintain regime stability. Moreover, because of the events in HK in 19, the PRC is unwilling to release more autonomy.

## **4.2 Although populism is rising in China, the PRC's real power holders are not held hostage by populism.**

Using the results of our ten questionnaires, we found that while 87% of mainland Chinese support nationalism, 74% support going to war. The research believes that the cross-strait issue should be solved by force and that the current PRC is too weak in facing the cross-strait issue. At the same time, according to their political orientation, they all showed some hostility to the United States, Britain and other Western societies. This is closely related to the current public opinion guidance of the Chinese Communist Party in China. China uses GFW (Great Firewall) to block foreign websites, making foreign news inaccessible to the Chinese, so the Chinese Communist Party has absolute control over news and public opinion in China. (State Internet Information Office Notice of Public Consultation on "Regulations on Network Data Security Management (Draft for Comments)" - Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for Network Security and Informatization (cac.gov.cn)) At the same time, 82 per cent of Chinese respondents support nationalism, reflecting a robust authoritarian personality. China's choice of "diplomatic issues such as territorial and trade disputes are caused by provocation from other countries" (abbreviated as "provocation from other countries"). If conditions permit, Taiwan should be unified by force ("unification by force"), and "if you are patriotic, you must boycott Japanese goods" ("if you are patriotic, you must boycott Japanese goods"). If you are patriotic, you must boycott Japanese goods" ("boycott Japanese goods"), and "hostile forces abroad are always trying to kill us. They are behind many of China's problems" ("hostile forces").

"These four issues were used as indicators of the latent variable "nationalism" (i.e., the explicit variable). Information exposure, authoritarian personality, and ideology... The analysis of the formation mechanism of national netizens' political attitudes\_MaDeyong.pdf. 80% of the interviewees met the conditions for forming an authoritarian personality, according to interviews. However, when interviewed civil service respondents, they showed their knowledge of authoritarianism and indicated that it is a means for the government to maintain social stability; however, they also indicated that these nationalistic ideas do not influence their decision-making. All civil servants interviewed chose "long-term stability between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait". They believe that nationalism is a necessary tool to maintain stability but that it would be a disaster if it were to be applied to international policy. At the same time, their view of Pelosi's visit to Taiwan is that it was an extremely regular political show and that China deservedly did not react. China's military exercises in the follow-up were meant to stabilize the people, not to deter the United States. Chinese civil servants have stated [6].

"I do not think China will go to war against Taiwan. First, we do not have an absolute military advantage in a landing war, just like Russia attacked Ukraine in February. China would be drawn into a war without a crushing military advantage, which is unacceptable to the PRC.

Second, if war is waged against Taiwan, China is likely to face a cut-off from most of the developed world, which would have a fatal impact on China's economy, and the PRC is unlikely to accept such an outcome. However, public opinion within China is hostile to Taiwan and wants the PRC to attack it. Stoking nationalism is also part of the PRC's efforts to maintain stability. The PRC has opened a particular Internet opinion office to control public opinion. However, we cannot be held hostage by public opinion, and we know that the current conditions cannot support us in winning the war so we will maintain the status quo for a long time.

This shows that although the mainstream groups in China support a forceful solution to cross-strait relations, the actual people in power in China do not believe that China should solve the problem by force. However, at the same time, they clearly perceive China's overall national power, so they will not use force to solve the problem hastily [7].

## 5 Conclusion

This paper argues that although there is friction between the Chinese government and the mainland, and many international conflicts have arisen, as well as the rise of nationalism within the mainland, authoritarian thinking has dominated. However, the people in power in mainland China are not wrapped up in authoritarianism and nationalism, and they clearly understand their strength and the international situation. So they, as those in power, do not think they will launch a military operation against Taiwan, even if Taiwan has made a cross-border move because China does not currently have sufficient capacity to support a military operation. At the same time, the Taiwanese do not recognize the policy of one country and two systems because the implementation of one and two systems in Hong Kong has led to democratic and economic failure. Taiwanese do not believe that one country or two systems can bring economic development and democratic progress to Taiwan. However, the mainland has not proposed a more reasonable policy than one country or two systems, so the public opinion in Taiwan does not support a peaceful solution to cross-strait relations.

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