How Much Land Does a Man Need?

The Prospects of a Hegemonic War between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America over Taiwan

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Abstract

Current cross-strait relations between the People's Republic of China (China) and the Republic of China (Taiwan) present a worrying dynamic due to uncertainties about Taiwan's political status. This raises the risk that China may seek to impose its reunification preferences through military force, and in so doing, trigger a hegemonic war between the ascendent China, and the current global hegemon, the United States of America (U.S.), due to Washington's defence commitments to Taiwan. Thus, this paper explores the following research question: what are the prospects that Taiwan could be a flashpoint for a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war? This paper explores this question in three sections. Section I examines China's, Taiwan's, and the U.S.' domestic and international level considerations, win-sets, and ranks their preferred decisions. It argues that the prospect of a conflict is conditional upon Taiwan's decision. Section II uses a multinomial logistic regression to examine the Taiwanese public's preference regarding their country's political status, and suggests that a growing Taiwanese identity and pan-Green partisan affinity in younger generations is reducing the feasibility of the status quo and reunification win-sets. Section III assesses the prospect that a hegemonic war may occur over Taiwan, and argues that the existing framework, ceteris paribus, could culminate in the outbreak of a hegemonic war. This paper argues that new options are required in regard to Taiwan's political status to reduce the risk of war, but that this requires China to broaden its One China principle to enable outcomes such as a commonwealth, confederation, or brotherhood framework. Furthermore, the U.S. can help defuse this situation by revising the U.S.' defence commitments to Taiwan.

Keywords: China, Taiwan, U.S., Taiwan Strait, hegemonic war

Table of Contents

Abstract *2*

Introduction *5*

Literature Review *7*

Methods *11*

Section I: Potential Options, and the International and Domestic Considerations *17*

Taiwan's History **17**

The Republic of China (Taiwan) **18**

Taiwan's Options 18

International Context 19

Domestic Level 20

The People's Republic of China (China) **24**

China's Options 24

International Context 25

Domestic Level 28

The United States of America (U.S.) **31**

U.S.' Options 31

International Context 32

Domestic Level 34

Cross-Strait Options, Win-Sets, International Considerations, and Preferences **35**

Taiwan 35

China 37

U.S. 38

Discussion 39

Section II: Drivers of Taiwanese Voter Preferences *39*

Dataset, Variables, and Hypotheses **39**

TEDS 39

Formula 40

Variables, Data Operationalization, and Hypotheses 40

Results **45**

Multinomial Logistic Regression 46

Implications for Taiwan's Win-Sets **49**

Taiwan's Cross-Strait Options, Win-Sets, International Considerations, and Preferences **53**

Section III: Prospects of a Hegemonic War, Potential Solutions, and their Feasability *54*

Conclusion *58*

References *62*

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Introduction

Clausewitz —a Prussian General and military theorist— wrote in his seminal work, *On War*, that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means […] the political objective is the goal, war is the means of reaching it" (Callum, 2001, p.61). War, in this sense, occurs due to competing national interests over the allocation of international goods, one in which two or more actors made a conscious policy decision to enter into a process of violent bargaining (Reiter, 2003, p.28). The political status of the Republic of China (Taiwan or Taipei) is a problematic source of competing interests in the 21st century, as it has the potential to trigger a war between an ascendent People's Republic of China (China or Beijing) and the current reigning global hegemon, the United States of America (U.S. or Washington; Gries & Su, 2013, p.76). China's rising hegemonic status vis-à-vis the U.S. pose legitimate grounds for concern regarding the prospect of a hegemonic war due to the Thucydides trap: Thucydides —an Athenian historian— noted that "what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta" (Thucydides et al., 1972, p.49); Allison (2017) examined this concept through a historical analysis of 16 cases involving a rising challenger and a ruling hegemon to conclude that 75% of these cases ended in a hegemonic war, and that these wars could be triggered by a third party (Allison, 2017, p.238).

Taiwan is a third party which could trigger a hegemonic war, and it has been a de-facto independent state since 1949: the Kuomintang (KMT) —a nationalist Chinese party which held supreme authority in the Republic of China— fled to the island in 1949 following their defeat against the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Chinese Civil War (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1489; Brecher, 2018, p.304); the island maintained its de-facto independence, despite several cross-strait crises during the 20th century, in part due to U.S. commitments to defend the island should China attempt to forcefully reunify with the island via military means (Ross, 2002, p.68;

Scobell, 2000, p.230). China considers Taiwan as part of their sacred territory, thus pressures Taiwan to reunify with the mainland (Gries & Su, 2013, p.74), and Beijing's 2005 Anti-Secession Law seeks to deter formal Taiwanese independence by outlining three triggers for a Chinese invasion of the island: 1) Fact of Taiwan's independence through either a formal or hidden de-jure declaration of independence; 2) A major incident such as a referendum that forces Taiwan's separation from China; 3) All prospects of peaceful reunification are exhausted (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2005).

These triggers could be of international concern as Lim's (2018) application of prospect theory suggests that Beijing is no longer satisfied with the continuation of the status quo — Taiwan's de-facto independence— as cross-strait tensions recommenced in 2016 following the election of President Tsai Ing-Wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), despite her moderation of the party's historical pro-independence stance (Lim, 2018, p.330). These divergent interests between Beijing and Taipei thus raise the risk that China may try to impose its political objective of reunification through military means, particularly when considering that it has ramped up military and coercive measures as part of its hybrid warfare against the island of Taiwan since 2016 (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p. 46; The Economist, 2021; Xiying, 2021, p.549). The U.S. echoes concerns of a possible Chinese invasion of Taiwan (Xiying, 2021), and some analysts believe that Beijing is preparing to seize the island by 2049, the 100th year anniversary of China's founding by the CCP (Fanell, 2019, pp.44-46); Washington has correspondingly increased its security commitments to Taipei (Beinart, 2021; Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.45–46). Nevertheless, the current cross-strait hostilities are aligned with Beijing's asymmetric engagement strategy with Taiwan's political parties: engagement with the pro-reunification KMT while marginalizing the pro-independence DPP (Lin, 2016, p.328). As such, Beijing may tolerate the

continuation of the status quo, and the current bout of cross-strait tensions could be mere posturing and a demonstration of resolve by Beijing.

The nexus of China, Taiwan, and U.S. interests over Taiwan's political status, and its implications for not only cross-strait relations but that of Sino-U.S. relations, raises a research question which this paper seeks to address: could a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war occur over Taiwan? This paper will explore this question through the application of Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory, as it provides a framework to examine how domestic and international politics constrains international outcomes (Trumbore & Boyer, 2000). In so doing, this paper will operate under the following parameters: a) China's 2005 Anti-Secession Law represent a strategic move as the triggers for war are dependent on Taiwan's actions (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p.100); b) Taipei has the first move and faces three options —the pursuit of formal independence, reunification with China, or the maintenance of the status quo; c) Beijing will then respond to Taipei's decision; d) and Washington will then decide whether to get involved, or not.

Literature Review

Many scholars ignore Taiwan's agency in cross-strait relations based on the logic of the Melian dialogues that "the strong do what they are able, while the weak submit" (Morrison, 2000, p.127); thus, they are primarily concerned about China and the U.S, and use a international level of analysis.

Brecher (2016), in his analysis of contemporary protracted conflicts, notes that over 50% of international crises had territory as a direct or prominent cause (Brecher, 2016, p.358); Diehl & Goertz (1992) expand upon this through their finding that territories which were associated with intangible values were correlated with a higher likelihood of prompting a militarized conflict (Diehl & Goertz, 1992, p.121). Taiwan has significant intangible values to China's sense of

ontological security: the island is considered as part of its sacred territory and perceived to be the final chapter of China's Century of Humiliation (Gries & Su, 2013, p.74; Li, 1996, pp.450-451). Thus, Taipei is pressured to accept an outcome that is favourable to Beijing, i.e. reunification, due to China's growing military power against Taiwan and the U.S., Taiwan's economic dependence on Beijing, and the long-term credibility of America's defence commitments to Taiwan (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p.48; Gries & Su, 2013, p.74; Hsieh, 2020, p.193); and Taipei's refusal to accede to Beijing's desires could prompt an invasion of the island (Ross, 2002, p.68; Scobell, 2000, p.230). In so doing, scholars use deterrence theory to assess if Beijing would attempt to impose its objective of reunification with Taiwan through military means, and if the U.S. could deter it.

Deterrence theory is based on the logic that credible threats of military retaliation, along with corresponding reassurances by a status quo state, can dissuade a revisionist state (Quackenbush, 2011). Ross (2002) notes that there are two deterrence games being played over the straits: a nuclear deterrence game between the U.S. and China, and a conventional deterrence game between China vis-à-vis the U.S. and Taiwan (Ross, 2002, p.61). The logic of nuclear deterrence is based on the power to hurt (Schelling, 1967, p.2), whereby the risk of nuclear escalation is theorized to limit the occurrence of actual conflict (Schelling, 1967, p.20). However, neither Beijing nor Washington believe that nuclear deterrence can prevent conventional warfare: China, for example, thinks that nuclear deterrence merely prevents the use of nuclear blackmail or coercion (Brown, 2021; Christensen, 2002, p.14; Ross, 2002, p.61). As such, the focus of deterrence theory concerns the balance of conventional forces.

From a conventional point of view, China's rise presents a serious challenge to the cross-strait balance of power. During the 90s and 2000s, for example, the prospect that China could successfully invade Taiwan was highly unlikely, with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) —

China's armed forces— being perceived as an antiquated military saddled with outdated equipment, corruption, and poor training (Chase et al., 2015, pp.13-14). Beijing, however, embarked on an ambitious military modernization program during the 1990s and 2000s to translate its immense economic power into the military realm (Kastner, 2016, pp.70–71). While it will take time for this to finish as the PLA must overcome both procurement and adoption challenges (Caverley, 2018), the conventional deterrence in defence of the status quo is failing, leading to rebalancing efforts by the U.S. as evidenced by renewed American arms sales to Taiwan, along with new U.S.-Taiwan security and government ties (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1502; Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.45–46). These actions in defence of the status quo are problematic, however, as they contribute to a cross-strait security dilemma and a reduction in reassurances to Beijing since U.S. security commitments to Taipei emboldens Taiwan to resist reunification with China, thereby increasing the possibility of conflict should Beijing determine that non-peaceful means are ineffective (Zhongqi, 2003, p.401).

These developments, of China's rise and counterbalancing by the U.S., are aligned with neorealist predictions over the Taiwan Strait. Mearsheimer (2001) argues that states ensure their survival in an anarchic world through power-maximization and the pursuit of hegemony: All great powers fear and distrust one another as —from their perspective— all other great powers are potential enemies (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.32). As such, they are never satisfied with the status quo and try to maximize their absolute power to ensure their place in the world, first by seeking regional hegemony in their home region, and then global hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp.41-42); this power-maximizing behaviour of the great powers is noted to lead to a tragedy of great power politics, as this unending power-maximizing behaviour causes endless competition and conflicts between the great powers (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp.232-233). This realist perspective suggests that

the U.S. —as the global hegemon— will clash with China's pursuit of regional hegemony, but does not explain why both Beijing and Washington sought to stabilize cross-strait tensions from 2000 to 2008 against the revisionist actions of Taiwanese President Chen Shui-Ban.

President Chen was a risk-taking leader whose pursuit of Taiwanese independence — despite the disapproval of both the U.S. and China— caused considerable cross-strait tensions during his Presidency (Ross, 2006, p.455). This suggests that Taiwan has agency over cross-strait relations and should thus be included in any analysis of the Taiwan strait issue. Furthermore, an analysis of Taiwanese inertia regarding the acceptance of American arms sales during the early 2000s, and President Ma's reluctance to engage in further cross-strait economic talks in 2014 following the Sunflower Movement, suggests that a domestic-level analysis is pertinent to Taiwan.

President Bush offered Taiwan an arms deal to increase their defensive capabilities vis-à-vis a rising China in 2001 (He & Feng, 2009, p.514). Taipei should have quickly accepted since this would have strengthened their resolve to resist reunification, especially when considering that Taiwan was under the administration of President Chen (Ross, 2006, p.455; Zhongqi, 2003, p.401). President Chen, however, was unable to gain support from the legislative Yuan for several years, and he was instead forced to use a special budget; Chase (2008) and Lu (2013) examined the sources of Taipei's reticence during the early 2000s, and concluded that domestic political contestations between the ruling pro-independence Pan-Greens and the pro-reunification Pan-Blues who controlled the legislative Yuan were the source of arms sales inactivity (Chase, 2008, pp.709–715; Lu, 2013, pp.167–169). This domestic game is also seen during the administration of the KMT President Ma. Ma was elected in 2008 and directed his government to pursue cross-strait economic liberalization and closer ties with China after decades of hostility (Wenger & Chen, 2017, pp.933–944), and a key outcome was the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement

which liberalized cross-strait economic activity (Kastner, 2016, p.66). This agreement was meant to be followed by the Cross-strait Trade in Services Agreement (CSSTA), but its ratification became stalled in the legislative Yuan, and the KMT's attempt to expedite its ratification triggered the Sunflower Movement in 2014 as protestors argued that the CSSTA would undermine Taiwan's sovereignty (Lin, 2016, p.330). The movement influenced the KMT's electoral defeat against the DPP, and prevented Ma from pursuing further cross-strait negotiations until the movement's demands over a strict oversight of cross-strait agreements could be met (Wenger & Chen, 2017, p.935). Thus, the impact of Taiwan's domestic level games regarding the acceptance of U.S. arms sales and the ratification of CSSTA suggest that the domestic level matters, as it influences what actions can be undertaken on the international level (Wang, 2013, p.1).

Methods

War is the pursuit of a political objective by violent means (Callum, 2001, p.61), but its costly and risky nature means that rational states prefer a negotiated outcome (Fearson, 1995). Therefore, international bargains are conducted to pursue political objectives, and Rosenau (1966) argues that such bargains are subject to various domestic and international political pressures; and studies on state decision-making processes suggest that these pressures can arise from domestic politics, the international environment, and national societies (Gong & Choi, 2019, p.358). Rosenau's (1966) argument to consider the domestic level of analysis in international relations is reminiscent of Kenneth Waltz's (2018) three levels of analysis for explaining war: the individual level which refers to the psychological characteristic of decision-makers; the domestic level which refers to a state's culture, society, and political institutions; and the international level which refers to a state's position in the international system. This paper will focus on the domestic and

international levels of analysis as the individual level analysis is not possible for unknown future decision-makers.

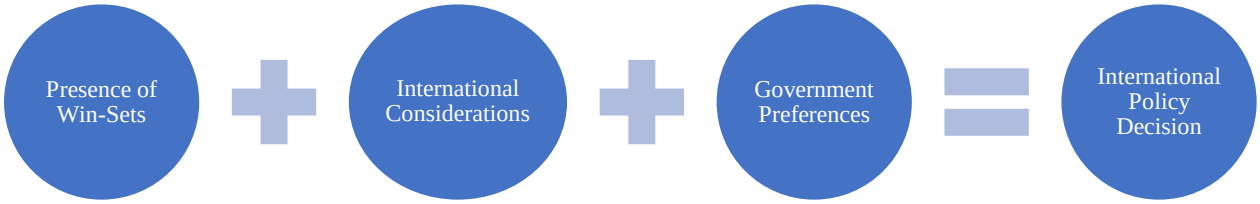
Most studies of international relations do not examine the domestic level as they often focus on the international level factors for their analysis (Moravcsik, 1993, p.6). Noone (2019) problematizes the exclusion of domestic factors, however, by nothing that "foreign policy cannot be properly understood without incorporating the influence of domestic politics" (Noone, 2019, p.167). Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory builds upon Rosenau's (1966) to provide a conceptual framework to examine how domestic politics constrains international politics. Putnam (1988) posits that governments are engaged in a two-level game during international negotiations: the first level is the international arena, where governments bargain with their foreign counterparts to find a mutually acceptable tentative agreement, enhance their international standing, and pursue the national interest; the second is the domestic arena, where governments attempt to garner domestic support in order to ratify the tentative international agreement (Putnam, 1988). All governments —autocratic and democratic— must respond to domestic pressures, be it partisan contests in democratic institutions or factional rivalries in an autocracy, and this produces constraints on a state's international behaviour as governments must satisfy both the domestic and international considerations (Trumbore & Boyer, 2000, p.680). The interplay of the domestic and international games produces win-sets —a range of international agreements whose ratification are supported at the domestic level, and the presence of overlapping win-sets make it more likely to reach a mutually acceptable international agreement (Noone, 2019, p.169). A lack of mutually acceptable win-sets prevents interstate agreements, and this situation can lead to war should one or more parties decide to pursue their political objectives by means of war (Fearon, 1995; Reiter, 2003, p.28). That said, a lack of a mutually acceptable win-set does not guarantee an outbreak of

war, however, as the decision to war is subject to considerations at the international level which influence its feasibility (Fearon 1995).

Trumbore & Boyer (2000), through their exploration of crisis decision-making as a two-level process, provides the following approach to operationalize Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory. Governments simultaneously play both the domestic and international level games: domestic political groups pressure the government to adopt certain international outcomes, and politicians seek to gain political power by satisfying domestic coalitions while trying to minimize the outcome's negative impacts on the international level (Trumbore & Boyer, 2000, p.680). Moravcsik (1993) adds on to Trumbore & Boyer's (2000) approach, as they stress that the application of Putnam's (1988) two-level game requires specifying the preference of, and constraints on, the major players in three areas: a) domestic politics and their related win-sets; b) the international environment which effect the feasibility of certain outcomes; c) the government's preference of outcomes (Moravcsik, 1993, p.23). Put together, Trumbore & Boyer's (2000) and Moravcsik (1993) suggest that: an analysis of domestic political factors and how they influence the presence of win-sets are required; that the international level considerations be examined; and that a government's preferred outcomes be explored to see whether an option —which is domestically and internationally possible— is ultimately pursued by decision-makers. Thus, this paper's structural framework is that the final policy decision at the international level —war or peace— is determined by the presence of overlapping win-sets which satisfy domestic level considerations, the prevailing international considerations, and the government's preference of outcomes as seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Structural Framework for an International Policy Decision



Previous applications of Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory concerning Taiwan demonstrates the validity of a linkage between the domestic and international level: Wenger & Chen (2017) and used survey data from 2012-2016 on Taiwanese public opinion and elite opinion in China to how domestic political pressures influence the presence of mutually acceptable win-sets regarding possible Taiwan's political status, and concluded that there were no mutually acceptable win-sets (Wenger & Chen, 2017, pp.951-952); Clark & Tan (2012) examined how domestic level factors, such as Taiwan's political polarization and nationalism in China, contributed to a breakdown in cross-strait relations during the 90s after a decade of moderation; Gong & Choi (2019), in their historical case study of the creation of the 1992 consensus, examined how the development of a Taiwanese national identity during the 1990s led to the creation of pro-independence parties which advocated for formal de jure independence from China which reduced the range of mutually acceptable win-sets (Gong & Choi, 2019, p.373).

These studies, however, do not examine the international level considerations noted by Moravcsik (1993); the case that decades of U.S. defence commitments to Taiwan prevented China from using military means to impose reunification suggests the need to examine the international level considerations (Ross, 2002, p.68; Scobell, 2000, p.230). Furthermore, the studies did not sufficiently explore how the U.S.' own interests regarding Taiwan's political status impactsd the

possible win-sets, as a hegemon can modify the range of possible win-sets by applying pressures on the other players (Gong & Choi, 2019, pp.359-360). Thus, this paper expands our understanding of the issue by exploring the domestic and international level considerations faced by China, Taiwan, and the U.S. in regard to Taiwan's political status. In so doing, it helps fill the gap in the literature as most works on the matter exclude Taiwan from their analysis, as they only examine interstate dynamics between China and the U.S. Furthermore, the current literature is limited as their levels of analysis are either the international or domestic level: the former limits our understanding about the impact of domestic level variables on the international level; and the latter does not address how international level considerations influence the final outcome. Hence, this paper seeks to fill this gap through the application of Putnam's (1988) two-level game theory to assess how domestic and international considerations influence the potential outcome of Taiwan's political status, and how China and the U.S. may respond.

This paper's framework has three sections which operate under the parameters that: a) Taipei is the first-mover and faces three options regarding their political status —the pursuit of formal independence, reunification with China, or the maintenance of the status quo; b) Beijing's response options; c) Washington's response options to Beijing. Taiwan makes the first-move as China's 2005 Anti-Secession law is classified as a strategic move, as the overall game is turned into a sequential one where Taiwan's action is met by a Chinese response (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p.100). Furthermore, Taiwan makes the first move due to historical precedence, as previous incidents such as the 1995 strait crisis, the creation of the controversial 2005 Anti-Secession law, and the onset of hybrid warfare against Taiwan is a Chinese response to Taiwanese President's Lee Teng-Hui's 1995 visit and controversial speech advocating independence at Cornell (Wei, 2008, p.94), President Chen's pro-independence moves (Wei, 2008, p.10), and the election of DPP

President Tsai Ing-Wen and her refusal to explicitly affirm the One China principle (Lim, 2018, p.331), respectively. Finally, China cannot be a first-mover due to ethical considerations seen in Chinese leader Jiang Zemin's 8-point speech that "Chinese do not fight Chinese" (Li, 1996, p.454), and as the U.S.' 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) proscribes the use of force to settle the Taiwan question, and supports this position through the threat of a possible U.S. intervention to defend Taiwan (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1491).

Section I provides a brief history of the issue, examines the domestic and international level considerations faced by each state, analyzes their respective win-sets, and ranks each state's preferred decision. Section II builds upon Wenger & Chen's (2017) use of Taiwanese public opinion data to explore Taiwanese win-sets by using Stata, a statistical software (Statacorp, 2015), to run a multinomial logistic regression on 2021 survey data from the Taiwan Election and Democraziation Study (TEDS) to measure the preferences of Taiwanese voters regarding their country's political status. A multinomial logistic regression examined the log odds of the outcomes as a linear combination of the predictor variables (University of California Los Angeles, 2021), and it was used as the response outcomes in the data were nominal variables. The results of the regression were interpreted through an analysis of its marginal effects: the change in probability when the predictor or independent variable increases by one unit (Torres-Reyna, 2014). The findings of the regression were used to explore how voter preferences shape Taiwan's win-sets, its trends, and its implications for the prospect of a cross-strait conflict. Section III draws on the results from Section I and Section II to assess the prospect that Taiwan could be a flashpoint for a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war. Afterwards, it discusses potential solutions which could reduce the risk of conflict.

Section I: Potential Options, and the International and Domestic Considerations

Taiwan's History

Historically, adverse sea currents and winds dissuaded the Chinese from regularly sailing to Taiwan until the 17th century (Hsu, 1980a, p.10), and while Chinese fishermen, merchants, and pirates made sporadic travels to Taiwan, this did not lead to the establishment of Chinese rule over the island (Hsu, 1980a, pp.8-11). The Dutch —when ignoring Taiwan's Indigenous peoples— were the first to proclaim their occupation of the island in 1624, as they established a colonial presence on the island in order to partake in the lucrative trade for Chinese silk and Japanese silver (Andrade, 2012, p.123); the Spanish responded to the Dutch presence by establishing their colony on the northern tip of the island, but were driven out due to a combination of Indigenous revolts and Dutch military activity (Hsu, 1980a, p.14). The Dutch colony of Taiwan was one of their most profitable, but this wealth was based off exploitation of the local Indigenous peoples which led to revolts that the Dutch colonialists crushed (Hsu, 1980a, p.15).

The Dutch colony would not last, however, as Koxinga — a Chinese warlord— conquered the Dutch colony of Taiwan in 1662 as part of his plan to liberate China from the Qing dynasty, a Manchurian dynasty which had seized Beijing in 1644 (Andrade, 2012, p.126); Koxinga and his descendants, however, were ultimately unsuccessful as Qing forces seized the island of Taiwan in 1683 (Hsu, 1980a, p.21). These events led to the establishment of Chinese rule over the island for the first time in history (Andrade, 2012, p.122; Knapp, 1980, p.57). Qing China's rule over Taiwan was a turbulent era characterized by the phrase "A minor revolt every three years and a major one every five years" (Hsu, 1980b, p.85), and a driver of discontent was Chinese colonialism as their settlements grew at the expense of the Indigenous Taiwanese peoples (Wang, 1980, pp.39-42).

Qing China's sovereignty over Taiwan ended in the first Sino-Japanese War of 1895, and Japan's colonial authorities used a series of well-planned and coordinated policies to turn Taiwan into an economically self-sufficient model colony (Heé, 2014, p.633). Japan's colonial rule was not benign, however, as they established an extensive surveillance system and killed any who dared oppose Japanese rule (Wang, 1980, pp.42-44). Japanese rule over the island ultimately ended in 1945, as the allied powers of the Second World War returned Taiwan to the sovereignty of the Republic of China as per the 1943 Cairo Declaration and the 1945 Potsdam Agreement (Brecher, 2018, p.304). The cessation of the Second World War was promptly followed by the renewal of the Chinese Civil War in 1945, which saw the Republic of China's escape to Taiwan in 1949 following its defeat against the CCP (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1489; Brecher, 2018, p.304). The CCP and the KMT engaged in decades of hostile behaviour as both claimed themselves as the legitimate government of all China (Brecher, 2018). Cross-strait relations began to improve in the 1980s due to Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms as well as increasing cross-strait social and economic contact (Lai, 2020, p.181), and a consensus was formed in 1992 that both China and Taiwan are part of One China (Wang et al., 2021). The improving relations were not to last, however, as the 1995 Taiwan Strait crisis erupted due to Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui's speech at Cornell (Wei, 2008, p.94). Since then, cross-strait tensions have flared up depending on which political party controls Taiwan, as China pursues engagement with the pro-reunification KMT while tensions emerge when the pro-independence DPP is in power (Lin, 2016, p.328).

The Republic of China (Taiwan)

Taiwan's Options

Taipei has three options regarding its political status: Independence; reunification with China under Beijing's views on the 92 Consensus; continued maintenance of the status quo.

Independence refers to a declaration of de-jure independence, any hidden moves towards it such as the changing of the country's name, or an event such as a referendum which could force Taiwan's separation from China (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2005). The 92 Consensus states that both sides of the Taiwan Strait agree that there is only one China, but Taipei and Beijing have different interpretations of what one China is (Wang et al., 2021): to Beijing, it means that both Taiwan and mainland China are under the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China; to Taipei, one China refers to the Republic of China (Wang et al., 2021, p.214). This paper uses Beijing's term of reunification under the 92 Consensus, whereby Taiwan can be completely incorporated into the Chinese polity or be permitted to govern itself as a special administrative region as per the model of one country, two systems (Lin, 2016, p.326). The maintenance of the status quo would see the continuation of Taiwan's de-facto independence from China.

International Context

Taiwan faces strong constraints at the international level due to the lack of global recognition of its sovereignty, apart from the U.S. The 1971 United Nations' General Assembly Resolution 2758 recognized Beijing as the only legitimate representative of China to the U.N. and stripped Taiwan of its formal statehood at the international level (Chang & Wang, 2005, p.32). Most states then ceased their diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in favour of China, and Beijing has intensified its effort to diplomatically isolate Taipei since 2016, leading states such as El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Panama to cut their formal ties to Taiwan (Harold et al., 2019, pp.1-2). While Taipei has consistently attempted to regain membership into the U.N. and other international bodies such as the World Health Organization and Interpol, these efforts have failed due to Beijing's diplomatic and economic influence (Xiying, 2021, pp.556–557).

Taiwan —despite its formal diplomatic isolation— is nevertheless part of the global economic system and maintains economic organizations throughout the world, e.g., Taiwan's Economic and Cultural Office in Ottawa (Wu, 2010, p.3); Taipei has tried to use its economy and affiliation to liberal values, e.g. democracy, to garner global recognition, but these too have failed (Rawnsley, 2012, p.129; Wang & Lu, 2008, p.443). Taipei has been successful in the U.S., however, as it successfully lobbied American policy and decision makers to pass various pro-Taiwan acts such as the TRA (Wu, 2010, p. 7), and recent years have witnessed growing relations between Taipei and Washington, especially in the security realm (Boon & Sworn, 2020, pp.1502–1503; Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p.46)**.**

Domestic Level

There are four key factors that shape which outcome at the international level is domestically feasible in Taiwan: cross-strait economic dependency and exchanges, democratic anxiety, identity politics, and voter pragmatism.

President Ma was elected in 2008 based on a platform of increased economic growth through the liberalization and intensification of cross-strait economic activity (Wenger & Chen, 2017, pp.933–944). To this end, Ma affirmed the 92 Consensus, thereby acquiescing to Beijing's conditions for resuming cross-strait dialogue which had been suspended since 1999 following the then Taiwanese President Lee Teng-Hui's two-state theory: China and Taiwan are separate states on either side of the Taiwan Strait (Wenger & Chen, 2017, p.934). Ma's affirmation of Beijing's conditions was followed by extensive cross-strait negotiations based on the logic of "economy first, politics later" and "easy things first, difficult things later" (Lin, 2016, p.322), which culminated in 23 cross-strait agreements such as: three direct links of shipping, air travel, and mail;

opening of mainlander tourism to Taiwan; and cross-strait cooperation on numerous sectors such as food safety, finance, crime, protection of intellectual property, etc. (Lin, 2016, p.322).

These agreements —while beneficial for the Taiwanese economy— have produced negative externalities for Taiwan's pro-independence forces. Taiwan is increasingly dependent on China for its economic prosperity (Liu & Li, 2017, p.266), and the impact of this dependency is akin to the juggernaut effect of trade liberalization: a self-reinforcing dynamic where an exporting sector becomes politically more powerful vis-à-vis the protectionist sector over successive rounds (Baldwin, 2016, pp. 101–102). In Taiwan, pro-trade actors desire access and friendly ties with China (Huang, 2019, p.103; Momesso & Lee, 2017, p.469), leading to a weakening of pro-independence forces since the growing economic dependency raises the opportunity cost that Taiwan faces from an outbreak of cross-strait hostilities (Chen, 2014, pp.539–540). This effect is also not limited to the economic realm as spillovers occur into other sectors: for example, Taiwan's media capitalists provide pro-China media coverage through a degree of self-censorship, as they desire to secure their financial interests through continued access into the Chinese media market (Huang, 2019, pp.100–102). Nevertheless, there are limits to the anti-independence effects from cross-strait exchanges as they are subject to diminishing returns due to democratic anxiety amongst younger generations of Taiwanese, as well as identity politics.

The younger generations of Taiwanese grew up during an era of democracy and relative prosperity, and are thus noted to be post-materialistic insofar as they value democracy more than the gains from economic cooperation with China (Weng, 2017, p.378; Wu & Lin, 2019, p.397). These younger generations are anxious about the survival of their democracy given Taiwan's growing dependency on China (Tzeng et al., 2017, p.9); as such, they are unlikely to support reunification with China given the risk to their democracy's survival (Tzeng et al., 2017, p.23).

Furthermore, there is a credible commitment problem since**,** even should Taiwan be permitted to govern itself as a special administration region upon reunification**,** this would give China significant bargaining power in the future without any mechanism that obliges Beijing to honour the original agreement (Kastner, 2016, p.88); this democratic anxiety is reinforced by Beijing's repressive policies against democratic Hong Kong, despite the 1997 Hong Kong Basic Law promising that the city would maintain its way of life until 2047 (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p.48). The concerns by the younger generations are reinforced by another phenomena: the intensification of identity politics in Taiwan since its democratization.

Taiwan underwent a series of democratic reforms during the late 80s and 90s which produced a winner-take all democratic system (Chen, 2014, p.524), and this triggered the onset of identity politics between the pro-independence pan-Greens led by the DPP and pro-reunification pan-Blues led by the KMT (Wang, 2013, p.2), as political candidates were incentivized to stir mutual hatred between the Taiwanese majority and the Chinese minority as an electoral tactic (Chen, 2014, p.527).

The source of animosity between the Taiwanese and Chinese stems from an era termed the White Terror: a time between 1947 and 1987 where the KMT dictatorship ruled the island with an iron fist (Wu & Lin, 2019, p.394). The KMT treated the islanders with contempt due to their past as a Japanese colony following the 1895 Sino-Japanese war, which, coupled with the KMT's corruption and inefficient policies, helped spark the 228 Incident —a revolt by the Taiwanese on February 28th, 1947 (Louzon, 2018, p.162). This revolt was brutally crushed by the KMT, and the party then enacted Sinicization policies meant to inculcate a Chinese identity amongst the islanders, garner legitimacy for the Chinese KMT's rule, and infuse a belief that Taiwan's history and ethnicity stemmed from a common Chinese ethos (Chen, 2014, p.524). In so doing, the KMT

banned the use of local Taiwanese languages spoken by most of the population, made Mandarin the national language —whose use was mandated in all official and non-official situations— and persecuted those deemed hostile to the KMT (Chen, 2014, p.524; Lin, 2010). The collective memory of these oppressive and assimilationist policies remains to this day, and acts as a perennial challenge against the legitimacy of Chinese rule over Taiwan (Fleischauer, 2007, p.375; Shih & Chen, 2010, p.94).

Pro-Taiwanese politicians appeal to the collective memory of the KMT's oppression to mobilize the majority Taiwanese voters and promote a Taiwanese identity (Chen, 2014, p.527; Shih & Chen, 2010, pp.102–103), but in so doing, this sparks concern from the previously ruling Chinese minority who entrench their own Chinese identity to defend against what they perceived as mainstream Taiwanese nationalism (Chen, 2014, p.542). Identity politics are a major factor in Taiwanese elections, and those with a Taiwanese identity are more likely to support Taiwanese independence and oppose reunification when compared to those with a Chinese identity (Wu & Lin, 2019, p.406). Identity politics between the Taiwanese and Chinese persist to this day, and an outcome is that the pro-Taiwanese pan-Greens support independence for Taiwan, while the pro-Chinese pan-Blues support unification (Wang, 2013, p.2).

This being said, Kastner (2016) notes that Taiwanese voters are pragmatic regarding Taiwan's political status as both pro-independence and pro-reunification voters are suggested to favour the continuation of the status quo (Kastner, 2016, p.55). As such, the median voter theory suggests that Taiwan's identity politics will be mediated, as political parties must soften their independence or reunification stances in favour of the voter's preferences regarding the continuation of the status quo (Downs, 1957; Magcamit, 2015, p.107). Therefore, while cross-strait economic dependency and exchanges can promote reunification amongst Taiwanese voters,

their effects are subject to diminishing returns in view of the growing democratic anxiety and Taiwanese identity, especially by the younger generations; but Taiwanese voters may be pragmatic insofar as seeking the continuation of the status quo.

The People's Republic of China (China)

China's Options

Beijing has 5 response-options to Taiwan: Acceptance; naval blockade; missile strikes; invasion; geo-economics and a diplomatic offensive.

Acceptance would see Beijing accept whichever decision Taipei makes. A naval blockade would see the PLA impose a naval blockade against Taiwan which would heavily damage Taiwan's export-based economy: this would involve deterring ship passage by marking sea lanes for missile firing, and physically stopping ship passages by force if required (Joffe, 2001, p.126). Missile strikes would involve targeted strikes on strategic targets throughout Taiwan to coerce and beat the population into submission (Joffe, 2001, p.126). An amphibious invasion across the 160km wide Taiwan Strait would be undertaken by the PLA as per their doctrine of limited war under high-tech conditions (Scobell, 2000, p.239). Geo-economics would see Beijing impose economic sanctions against Taiwan, a costly signal which displays its disapproval and resolve without use of violence: it would demonstrate a strong and credible signal given the cross-strait economic activity while economically punishing Taiwan (Kastner, 2006, p.667); it would be coupled with a strong diplomatic offensive to isolate Taiwan through secondary sanctions and lobbying against Taiwan's remaining global partners, as seen in the Dalai Lama effect whereby states whose head of state meets with the Dalai Lama suffer a reduction in their trade volume with China (Fuchs & Klann, 2013, p.165).

International Context

China's decisions against Taiwan will be influenced by: the cross-strait military balance of power; its involvement in the global economy; and the rhetoric of peaceful development that seeks to legitimize its hegemonic rise.

The cross-strait military balance is a crucial factor as an amphibious invasion would be a monumental undertaking: the PLA would require at least a 3 to 1 force ratio to have a reasonable chance of success (Mearsheimer, 1989, p.79), which —given Taiwan's military of over 2 million soldiers in 2021— would require the PLA to invade with at least 6 million (Easton, 2021). Furthermore, it is possible that a future scenario would involve larger military forces since preparations for such an invasion would likely be detected given its immense scope, thereby enabling the Taiwanese defenders to further prepare themselves for the pending onslaught (Ross, 2002, p.78). This also does not consider a potential American intervention: while Beijing prefers to quickly seize Taiwan in order to present Washington with a fait-accompli to dissuade the outbreak of a multilateral war (Quackenbush, 2006, p.579; Ross, 2002, p.53), it must hedge against the risk of an uncertain American intervention in order to prepare for the worst-case scenario (Joffe, 2001, p.116).

Therefore, Beijing invests in asymmetric military capabilities meant to dissuade U.S. intervention (Ross, 2002, p.53), procuring capabilities such as aircraft carriers (Department of Defense, 2021, pp.6-7), and has been developing a doctrine of limited war under high-tech conditions since the 90s for a conflict over Taiwan (Scobell, 2000, p.239); the outcome is that the military balance is becomingly ever more unfavourable to the U.S. (Davidson, 2021, p.41). As a result, Washington has pursued counter-balancing actions against Beijing: arms agreements to Taiwan during the Trump and Biden administration (Grothusen, 2021) and alliance-building in the

Asia-Pacific to balance against China (Ignatius, 2021). Thus, while the military balance has shifted in China's favour in recent years, growing American security commitments to the region as part of its Asian pivot will likely lead to a form of power parity between China and the U.S, but Taiwan and U.S. forces will benefit from a defender advantage as they will be fighting from prepared positions and know the terrain (Mearsheimer, 1989, pp.57-58). Furthermore, Beijing's intent to fight a cross-strait war is tempered by two additional factors at the international level: its involvement in the global economy, and its rhetoric of peaceful development that seeks to legitimize its hegemonic rise.

China's rise prompted growing Western concerns whether its intentions are those of a status quo or revisionist power; Beijing has thus promoted a concept of peaceful rise since 2003 —later redefined as peaceful development— which highlights the interdependency between China's economic prosperity and the international environment, arguing that Beijing is committed to global stability as it impacts its own economic well-being (Gries, 2007, pp.45-46**;** Lin, 2016, p.323). After all, China is firmly entrenched in the global economic system which raises the opportunity cost associated of a potential cross-strait conflict regardless of whether it is an invasion or mere blockade (Finkelstein, 2001, pp.23-24), and this could reduce Beijing's proclivity to use military force against Taiwan.

The focus on economic prosperity is aligned with Danner & Martin's (2019) analysis that Beijing is pursuing a Dutch-style hegemony —rather than a benevolent or coercive one— as Beijing's hegemonic interests are mainly motivated by neutral, self-interested, and state-centric economic intentions (Danner & Martín, 2019, p.204). In so doing, Beijing does not desire or intend to overthrow the current U.S.-led liberal order as it instead seeks to reform parts of the system (Peng, 2018, p.68); in the realm of international law, for example, China is layering an

authoritarian legal system on top of the extant liberal legal order (Ginsburg, 2020, pp.256-257). In addition, these efforts at institutional reform could be influenced by Beijing's limited prospects in promoting its own countervailing hegemonic order (Allan et al., 2018).

A hegemonic order is created by a dominant power, and it creates and imposes the rules that its members must follow (Allan et al., 2018, pp.844-845). Members, however, can choose to consent to being governed or resist, as while a hegemon can coerce its members to follow the rules, coercion has its limits and is not a sound long-term strategy (Allan et al., 2018, p.845). Thus, hegemons nudge their followers towards the desired behaviour —rule following— through the manufacture and promotion of a legitimizing ideology that seeks to gain consent for the order's rules and ideas (Allan et al., 2018, p.845); this concept is articulated by Cox (1987) who incorporates Gramsci's (1971) insight that hegemony requires consent from the governed to define hegemony as ideologically based "on a broad measure of consent" (Cox, 1987, p.7). Consent must come from the greater public should a hegemonic order desire to outlast any leadership changes (Allan et al., 2018, p.847; Making Identities Project [MIP], 2020, p.8); in so doing, the success of a legitimizing ideology depends on the affinity of both the ideology and the hegemon's own national identity discourse with those in their member-states (Allan et al., 2018, p.840; MIP, 2020, pp.11-14). National identity discourses provide a sense of ontological security to a country's citizens by giving them a sense of community and purpose, influencing what values they hold dear, and who they perceive as friend or foe (Allan et al., 2018, p.848; MIP, 2020, p.14); should the elite and public's identity be compatible with a hegemon's identity and ideology, then the state will be more likely to consent to being governed by the hegemon and seek to emulate its socio-economic systems, thereby making the state even closer to the hegemon and leading to a more stable order (Allan et al., 2018, p.854; MIP, 2020, p.13). The challenge faced by China, however, is that most

of the world's Great Powers are firm democracies at both the elite and public level, and this greatly limits Beijing's ability to garner support towards its own hegemonic position (Allan et al., 2018).

China's hegemonic limitations are further evidenced in the Asia-Pacific: it desires to establish a regional hegemonic order in-lieu of the U.S. by improving its regional influence through an emphasis on trade and harmonious co-existence (Hass 2021); but most Asian states are nonetheless concerned over Beijing's growing assertiveness and nationalistic rhetoric which sees them favour Washington over Beijing (Allan et al., 2018, pp.864-865; Vucetic, 2021, pp.27-28).

While China has spent considerable resources to build its image as a peaceful and cooperative country, this can be severely damaged by a single incident (Rawnsley, 2012, p.127): an attack on Taiwan, for example, would undermine the credibility of Beijing's peaceful development rhetoric and possibly prompt regional balancing against them (Mearsheimer, 2001, p.4), particularly when considering China's numerous territorial disputes with its neighbours (Tweed, 2018). Thus, China's limited prospects at establishing a strong countervailing hegemonic system vis-à-vis the U.S.-led liberal order forces Beijing to be cautious in its actions against Taiwan, as strong aggression by Beijing could trigger regional balancing against it which would further entrench the U.S. hegemonic position in the Asia-Pacific.

Domestic Level

Domestically, the CCP —China's governing authoritarian regime— cultivates government legitimacy from performance legitimacy in the form of economic growth and nationalist sentiments, but it must also maintain support from the military.

The CCP's legitimacy was historically derived from the revolutionary credentials of leaders such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping who —despite lacking formal leadership positions— were the de-facto leaders of China during 1949-1976 and 1978-1992 respectively

(Brecher, 2018, pp.307–308). Successive leaders of the CCP, however, lack such revolutionary credentials and rely on economic growth and nationalism to maintain government legitimacy in the face of communism's declining relevance in China (Wei, 2008, p.96). Economically, Beijing values cross-strait economic activity (Momesso & Lee, 2017, pp.466–467), as it certainly helped China become the world's largest economy when measured by purchasing power parity (Allison, 2017, p.20), but this growth is unequal as it is concentrated along the coastal regions (Yang, 2002, p.331). Thus, the CCP launched economic development programs for its interior and western provinces (Ma & Summers, 2009, p.4), and the economic diversification that these projects produce may reduce the importance of economic activity with Taiwan. However, economic development is not a panacea for the CCP's legitimacy problem when considering that authoritarianism in the Republic of Korea and Taiwan were toppled despite high rates of economic growth (Johnson, 1987, pp.7-9; Tien & Shiau, 1992, pp.2-3), thus the CCP also uses nationalism to garner regime legitimacy.

The CCP frames itself as the saviour of the Chinese nation who put an end to the country's Century of Humiliation from 1842 to 1949 (Roblin, 2017). This era began on August 29th, 1842 following Qing China's defeat against the British empire in the First Opium War (Roblin, 2017), and the next century would see China's prestige damaged by a series of foreign invasions as Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and the U.S. vied for Chinese territory: China lost a third of its territory (Kaufman, 2010, p.2), and the razing of the Summer Palace by British and French troops in 1860 —which led Victor Hugo to write "We call ourselves civilized and them barbarians […] here is what Civilization has done to Barbarity" (Bowlby, 2015)— is used by the CCP to remind its citizens of Western aggression, the narrative being that only a strong CCP can prevent another such calamity (Kaufman, 2010, p.3). The CCP continues to use such nationalist rhetoric

to justify its rule, and Taiwan's reunification is part of this narrative as it is framed as the final chapter of China's Century of Humiliation (Gries & Su, 2013, p.74), as such, the CCP will continually seek to reunify with Taiwan to fulfill its nationalist rhetoric.

In particular, the PLA believe that they have a sacred role to play in the closing of China's Century of Humiliation: they were intimately involved with the creation of China during the Chinese Civil War (Scobell, 2000, p.240), and they suffered a major defeat in 1949 during the battle for Quemoy islands when attempting to gain a staging ground for an invasion of Taiwan (Yu, 2016, p.91). The military remains haunted by the defeat and maintained regular bombardments of the Quemoy islands until the 70s, when it then became involved with Deng's efforts towards peaceful reunification (Scobell, 2000, pp.240-241). The military's influence on Beijing's Taiwan policy was limited during the Mao and Deng eras, but their influence has since grown as CCP leaders must court and maintain the military's support (Bi, 2002; Li, 1996); this can be seen during the 1995 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the passing of 2005 Anti-Secession Law.

The crisis of 95 was sparked by the Taiwanese President Lee's speech at Cornell —his alma mater— where he talked about Taiwan's desire for sovereignty and signalled his determination to challenge the impossible (Wei, 2008, p.94). This speech, along with the fact that the U.S. had given him a visa despite Beijing's protests, lead to significant discontent amongst the PLA leadership against what they saw as a feeble response by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Jiang Zemin —the new leader of China (Bi, 2002, p.560). The military applied significant pressure against Jiang to adopt tougher measures: the Deputy Chief of Staff Xiong Guangkai convened an emergency session of the Taiwan Affairs' Leading Small Group —the top policy-making body regarding Taiwan— and invited two other senior PLA officials to confront Jiang Zemin and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen's Taiwan policy (Scobell, 2000, p.231); the Vice-Chairman of the

Central Military Commission whipped up belligerent sentiments amongst military officials and critiqued Jiang's Taiwan policies for being weak (Bi, 2002, p.577); the military embarked on its own policies against Taiwan by deploying and firing missiles into the Taiwan Strait (Bi, 2002, p.572); and senior-ranking PLA officials entered into a coalition with Jiang's political rivals to challenge his successor position as they felt Jiang was compromising China's national security (Bi, 2002, p.572). These actions demonstrated to Jiang that he had lost the military's support and loyalty, and he quickly accepted the military's proposals to escalate coercive policies against Taiwan to consolidate his position as successor (Li, 1996, p.451).

The military's influence is seen again during the successor contest of 2004 following the end of Jiang's final Presidential term. Hu Jintao replaced Jiang as the leader of China, but he faced public unrest over growing income inequality and corruption and had to appease the military hardliners to gain the military's support (Wei, 2008, pp.179-180). Hu Jintao gained support for his rule from both the public and the military through the passing of the 2005 Anti-Secession Law, as it appealed to nationalism to satisfy the population while appeasing the military by creating a formal mechanism to deter Taipei from seeking further independence; the outcome of this law has been the institutionalization of the trigger of a cross-strait war and the pacification of the nationalistic and militaristic domestic forces (Wei, 2008, p.160), but these domestic drivers could flare up if the prospects of Taiwan's separation from China increase.

The United States of America (U.S.)

U.S.' Options

Washington can respond to Beijing's decision through acceptance or intervention. Acceptance will see the U.S. accept China's decision without any intervention. An intervention could take form in various ways, be it a military intervention against China, or the use of sanctions

and diplomatic pressure. The form of intervention would be conditional upon Beijing actions: should they use military options, then the U.S. could militarily intervene; if Beijing uses non-military options, so too will Washington.

International Context

Washington's responses are influenced by: its policy of strategic ambiguity; the credibility of its international commitments; and its relations with China and Taiwan.

The U.S. has been involved since the start of the protracted conflict over Taiwan (Brecher, 2018, p.304), and pursues a policy of strategic ambiguity to prevent China and Taiwan from changing the status quo: deterring Beijing from embarking on a military invasion of Taiwan, and Taipei from advancing formal or hidden independence (Zhongqi, 2003, pp.390–391). The U.S. became involved on behalf of Taiwan when it deployed the 7th Fleet to deter a Chinese invasion of the island during the Korean War, and it entered a mutual defence pact with Taiwan after the first Strait crisis of 1954-55 (Kastner, 2006, p.654). Washington ended its formal recognition and alliance with Taipei in 1979 as part of the Nixon-era rapprochement with Beijing (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1490), and made three communiques in 1972, 1978, and 1982: Washington acknowledged that both Beijing and Taipei maintain there is but One China, that China includes Taiwan, and Washington promised to reduce arms sales to Taipei (Boon & Sworn, 2020, pp.1490–1491).

The U.S. Congress, however, passed the TRA 1979: peace and stability of East Asia is of significant American and international concern, and Washington expects the Taiwan question to be settled by peaceful means; to this end, they will provide arms of a defensive character to Taiwan, and maintain America's capacity to resist any use of force or other coercive measures against Taiwan (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1491). U.S. President Reagan strengthened the TRA in 1982 through the 6 assurances, one of which assures Taipei that Washington would not formally

recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1491). The U.S. in recent years has moved towards strategic clarity, however, as both President Trump and Biden have strengthened Washington's commitments to Taiwan's defence through increased arms sales and strengthening of U.S.-Taiwan defence and government links (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.45–46); President Biden publicly affirmed that the U.S. would military intervene in defence of Taiwan should Beijing invade (Ruwitch, 2021). The outcome of Washington's agreements is that the final decision regarding Taiwan is determined by the judgement of the U.S. President and Congress of the time, which are then subject to U.S. public opinion, prevailing international commitments, and relations with China and Taiwan (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1491).

The U.S. has numerous international commitments in the Asia-Pacific, most notably under the San Francisco system —a network of bilateral alliances with Asia-Pacific states such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Australia, and Taiwan (Buszynski, 2011, p.315). Under this system, Washington is a major security actor as it provides extended deterrence for its allies, but in so doing, the U.S. must demonstrate the credibility of its security commitments to its allies and potential adversaries (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p.88). Credibility ensures that American promises and threats are taken seriously, and a credibility gap would be detrimental for their global commitments as it would limit their effectives (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p.100). As a result, it will be difficult for Washington to do nothing in the face of Chinese aggression against Taiwan in view of the American security commitments expressed in the TRA and President Biden's public affirmation that the U.S. will intervene in defence of Taiwan. Washington's need to maintain its credibility is pertinent when considering Beijing's attempts to establish regional hegemony in Asia: Beijing's attempts would be emboldened should they perceive that U.S. commitment to the region is faltering, and Washington's Asian partners may likewise be willing to substitute the U.S. as the

primary provider of international goods —security, economic, cultural, etc.— in favour of China (Cooley et al., 2021, p.5).

Washington must also maintain its credibility when considering growing Sino-U.S. tensions. While there is a need for the two superpowers to cooperate on various global governance issues such as climate change and global economic stability (Copper, 2014, p.153), there has nonetheless been growing structural competition between them over areas such as economic and technological development, and the U.S. maintenance of the status quo against China's selective revisionism (Medeiros, 2019, pp.103-106); meanwhile, key buffers are decreasing as mutual public-opinion has worsened, while the Chinese and American economies are being decoupled (Bown & Irwin, 2019, pp.5-6; Medeiros, 2019, p.111). Meanwhile, Washington's relations with Taipei are improving, as seen by: the 2019 Taiwan Assurance Act which supports Taiwan's accession into various international organizations (Xiying, 2021, p.557); the 2018 Taiwan Travel Act which led to the receipt of Taiwanese government officials in American government facilities and the sending of Cabinet-level officials to Taipei (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1502); the 2020 Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Act which increases the scope of the U.S.' relations with Taiwan, while encouraging international actors to strengthen their ties with Taiwan and punishing those who break their ties (Boon & Sworn, 2020, p.1502); and the U.S. fields a small but growing contingent of U.S. military personnel on Taiwan since 2020 (Detsch, 2021).

Domestic Level

Historically, the U.S. Congress and the Presidency were disunited in their China policy: Congress —especially the pro-Taiwan lobby— pressed for a firm American involvement with Taiwan vis-à-vis China (Xiying, 2021, p.563), while the Presidents' stances shifted between various administrations, e.g. Truman and Eisenhower's Anti-Communist stance and Nixon and

Carter's rapprochement with Beijing (Boon & Sworn, 2020, pp.1490-1493). There is now, however, a bipartisan consensus that China is a growing threat which must be checked, and this view is shared by the Presidency, be it a democrat or republican (Xiying, 2021, p.563). This executive-congress consensus regarding China is unlikely to change as it stems from the material interests and identities of the U.S.: materially, there has been a securitization of bilateral economic relations, and those advocating for closer relations with China have been undermined by the onset of the Sino-U.S. trade wars and their economic and technological competition (Medeiros, 2019, p.99); in terms of identities, the U.S. perceives China as an aggressive, authoritarian, and nationalist state —akin to the Axis powers of the Second World War which is threatening the U.S.-led democratic liberal order and must thus be stopped (Fanell, 2019, p.12).

The American public is also increasingly hostile to China as while 35% of U.S. respondents held unfavourable opinions of China in 2005, this share has increased to 66% in 2020 —an increase which cannot be solely attributed to COVID-19 as this figure was 60% in 2019— and these unfavourable attitudes are bipartisan (Galston, 2021); these negative attitudes have intensified in recent years over concerns about China's totalitarianism, lack of human rights, and claims that China stole U.S. manufacturing jobs (Silver et al., 2021).

Cross-Strait Options, Win-Sets, International Considerations, and Preferences

Taiwan

Taipei has 3 options: the pursuit of formal independence, reunification with China, or the maintenance of the status quo. As a democracy, Taiwan's win-sets are shaped by its electorate as politicians advocate domestically supported options since they must appeal to the desires of their electorate to have electoral success (Wang, 2013, p.1); especially following Taiwan's electoral reforms of 2008 which shifted the rules away from a semi-proportional design towards a

majoritarian system (Stockton, 2010, p.22). After all, the KMT President Ma's efforts to enhance cross-strait trade through the ratification of the CSSTA triggered voter unrest regarding cross-strait agreements which contributed to the KMT's electoral defeat in 2014 against the DPP at the local level, and led to the 2014 Sunflower Movement that prevented the pursuit of further cross-negotiations until the protestor's demands for a strict oversight of cross-strait agreements could be met (Wenger & Chen, 2017, p.935).

Taiwan's win-sets are explored in Section II, but all three options may be domestically feasible as cross-strait economic dependency and exchanges promote reunification preferences amongst Taiwanese voters (Chen, 2014, pp.539–540; Huang, 2019, pp.100–102). However, pro-reunification effects could be subject to diminishing returns in view of the growing democratic anxiety and Taiwanese identity (Weng, 2017, p.378; Wu & Lin, 2019, p.397), especially by the younger generations (Tzeng et al., 2017), which encourages the pursuit of independence or the continuation of the status quo. Should all three options be domestically feasible, then Taiwan's ranked preferences under a pro-independence pan-Green government are: 1) independence; 2) status quo; 3) reunification. Independence is the most preferred outcome as it would grant Taiwan formal sovereignty and the right to engage in international relations; reunification is the least desired as this would see the end of Taiwan's de facto sovereignty and the likely end of its democratic institutions; while status quo enables Taiwan to maintain its de facto sovereignty. Taiwan, however, is unlikely to pursue formal independence due to its diplomatic estrangement from the world and the threat posed by China (Xiying, 2021, pp.556–557; Davidson, 2021, p.41), but it is unlikely to cow to China's demands to reunify when considering its ties with the U.S., as well as domestic opposition against it (Boon & Sworn, 2020, pp.1502–1503; Chang-Liao & Fang,

2021, p.46; Tzeng et al, 2017). Thus, Taiwan will likely pursue the continuation of the status quo should it be able under a pro-independence government.

Should Taiwan be under a pro-reunification pan-Blue government, then its ranked preferences are the following: 1) reunification; 2) status quo; 3) independence. Reunification is the most preferred as it would the pro-reunification parties to fulfill their goal and assuage their concerns over growing Taiwanese nationalism; independence is the least desired as this runs contrary to the desires to reunify with China; while the status quo lies is preferred to independence since it does not lead to a formal breakaway from China.

China

Beijing has 5 response-options to Taiwan: Acceptance; naval blockade; missile strikes; invasion; geo-economics and a diplomatic offensive. Its win-sets are dependent on Taiwan's actions. Should Taiwan seek reunification, then acceptance is the only win-set: domestic nationalism and the PLA's influence is likely to promote acceptance of Taiwanese reunification, and the alternative options will be rejected as they would undermine Taiwan's offer to reunify; at the international level, reunification with Taiwan would enhance China's strength and provide support to its peaceful rise rhetoric.

Should Taiwan pursue the continuation of the status quo, China's has five win-sets. Acceptance of the status quo is the historical precedence, and domestic pressures from nationalism and the PLA has been tempered by the anti-secession law (Wei, 2008, p.160); this being said, nationalism and the PLA enable alternative non-peaceful options, but considerations at the international level regarding an uncertain military balance, and the need to maintain its economic interests and peaceful rhetoric reduces the proclivity to use overt hostile options (Gries, 2007, pp.45-46; Danner & Martin, 2019; Lin, 2016, p.323). Thus, should Taiwan continue the status quo, China's ranked

preferences are: 1) acceptance; 2) geo-economics and a diplomatic offensive; 3) blockade; 4) missile strikes; 5) invasion.

Should Taiwan pursue independence, China has four win-sets. Nationalism and the PLA will likely exert considerable pressure on the CCP to act forcibly against Taiwan as per the 2005 Anti-Secession Law's triggers for war. While the military balance is uncertain, the CCP is likely to invade by invoking the 2005 Anti-Secession law to justify its action, and it will likely opt towards tougher actions to respond to domestic pressures to punish Taiwan. Thus, China's ranked preference in the event of a Taiwanese declaration of independence are: 1) invade; 2) missile strikes; 3) blockade; 4) geo-economics and a diplomatic offensive.

U.S.

Washington makes the final choice, and they can decide between acceptance or intervention. Its win-sets are ultimately dependent on Taiwan and China's preceding decisions. Should Taiwan seek reunification and China accepts, then the U.S. is likely to accept the outcome as per the TRA, and as peaceful reunification is unlikely to possess the moral authority required to mobilize domestic support for an intervention. In the event that Taiwan decides to continue the status quo, Washington's win-sets are conditional upon China's response: should China accept, the American public and elected officials will accept as per the historical precedence; should China use other options, the bipartisan and President-Congress consensus regarding the need to check Beijing's growing influence (Xiying, 2021, p.563; Medeiros, 2019, p.99), as well as the American public's unfavourable attitudes towards China (Galston, 2021; Silver et al., 2021), will likely produce domestic support for tit-for-tat intervention, i.e., matching China's actions, rather than accepting China's coercions against Taiwan. At the international level, the need to maintain the credibility of U.S. commitments (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p.88), as well as deteriorating Sino-U.S. relations

and improving Taiwan-U.S. relations (Boon & Sworn, 2020; Medeiros, 2019, pp.103-106), will enhance the likelihood of a U.S. intervention. In the case that Taiwan seeks independence and China does not accept it, the U.S. will most likely intervene against China, regardless of whether the democrats or republican party holds power, due to the aforementioned bi-partisan and President-Congress consensus, the U.S. public's disdain for China, the need to maintain U.S. credibility, and U.S. relations with China and Taiwan.

Discussion

This section explored what options each country faced, the domestic variables which shape their win-sets, the international considerations they face, and their preferred options. The analysis suggest that the prospect that Taiwan could trigger a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war is conditioned by Taiwan's initial decision: if it seeks independence, then China would likely invade due to domestic forces, and the U.S. would subsequently intervene to maintain the credibility of its international commitments given its growing negative perception of China; if Taiwan chooses to reunify or maintain the status quo, then China is likely to accept these outcomes, and the U.S. would likely accept China's decision. Thus, the next section runs a multinomial logistic regression to explore the domestic drivers and trends which shape Taiwan's win-sets.

Section II: Drivers of Taiwanese Voter Preferences

Dataset, Variables, and Hypotheses

TEDS

The TEDS database is an inter-university project in Taiwan, funded by the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Ministry of Science and Technology (TEDS, 2021). This project conducts nationally representative face-to-face surveys that track Taiwanese attitudes on various national issues, including the variables of interest in this paper (TEDS, 2021). The dataset

for the year 2021 was used, and the relevant variables were recoded and appended in Stata (Statacorp, 2015).

Formula

The multinomial logistic regression measured the probability of supporting reunification, or independence, compared to the status quo. The formula is the following:

$$\ln \Omega_{m|b}\,(X) = \ln \frac{\Pr(y = m|x)}{\Pr(y = b|x)} = \mathrm{X}\,\beta_{m|b},\ for\ m = 1\ to\ J - 1,$$

b refers to the base category for comparison; ln $\Omega_{m|b}$ (X) is the conditional odds of having other responses relative to the base category; X is the vector of independent variables, β refers to the vector of regression coefficients, and J is the number of categories in the dependent variable. In regard to the dependent variable, The dependent variable has there response outcomes: maintenance of the status quo, reunification, or independence. Seven independent variables are used in the model: a) generational change; b) party affinity; c) economic outlook; d) political regime preferences; e) one's national identity; f) sex; g) education. The variables were operationalized through the recoding of responses attained by TEDS and discussed below.

Variables, Data Operationalization, and Hypotheses

Dependent Variable: Respondent's Stance on Taiwan's Political Status

TEDS asks respondents about their preferences on Taiwan's political status: the answers were recoded so that 0 are those who support the maintenance of the status quo, 1 are those who express pro-independence sentiments, while 2 are those who have pro-reunification sentiments. As these are nominal variables, a multinomial logit regression was run to measure the probability of supporting reunification, or independence, compared to the status quo.

Independent Variable (X1): Generational Change

The theory of generational value argues that the change in societal preferences on a given issue is the result of older generations being replaced by younger generations who hold different values (Abramson & Inglehart, 1987, p.232); different generations have differing values as each generational cohort spend their formative years in particular political, social, and economic contexts that shape their preferences, and this outlook persists through much of their later life (Wenger, 2017, pp.365-355). The theory of generational change is informed by the persistence model which notes that the values learned in one's young age persist for the rest of one's life, and uses the impressionable years model to explain when and how such values are formed (Wenger, 2017, p.366). The impressionable years model notes that political attitudes are highly malleable and susceptible to change during one's adolescence and early adulthood, and that one's political experiences during these formative years are not easily replaced —especially as the search for individual identity during these years includes a political component (Wenger, 2017, p.366); the model elaborates that different political generations form as people born around a similar point in time experience a comparable historical experience that shape their collective political attitudes (Wenger, 2017, p.366).

Regarding Taiwan, Chang & Wang (2005) provide the following generational typology: a) the first generation refers to those born prior to 1931 who entered their formative years before 1949, and witnessed social conflicts between different ethnic groups under Japanese colonial rule and the 228 incident (Chang & Wang, 2005, p.34; Liu & Li, 2017, p.268); b) the second generation was born between 1932 and 1953, their formative years were between 1949 and 1971, and they not only witnessed Taiwan's rapid economic growth between 1960 and 1970, but also saw Taiwan's loss of its international status in 1971 (Chang & Wang, 2005, p.34; Liu & Li, 2017,

p.268); c) the third generation was born between 1954 and 1968, entered their formative years between 1972 and 1986, and they experienced Taiwan's economic boom and the establishment of the first opposition party —DPP (Chang & Wang, 2005, p.34; Liu & Li, 2017, p.268) ; d) the fourth generation was born between 1969 and 1978, their formative years were between 1986 and 1996, and they witnessed the era of student social movements, Taiwan's democratization, and the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995 and 1996 (Chang & Wang, 2005, pp.34-35; Liu & Li, 2017, pp.268-269). Liu & Li (2017) expand upon Chang & Wang's (2005) typology by adding the fifth and sixth generations: e) the fifth generation was born between 1979 and 1988, their formative years were between 1996 and 2006, and they experienced democratic contestations between the KMT and DPP —one which the DPP won in 2000, during which the PLA used missile tests in an unsuccessful attempt to intimidate voters to steer away from the pro-independence DPP (Liu & Li, 2017, p. 369); f) the sixth generation was born after 1989, and entered their formative years after 2007 where they witnessed the continuance of democratic contestations which saw the KMT's electoral victory in 2008 under President Ma, and the subsequent signing of various cross-strait agreements (Liu & Li, 2017, p.269).

Liu & Li (2017) suggest that the fifth and sixth generations are less likely to support reunification with China as they have been subject to the Taiwan-centric education reforms of the 90s, as this new curriculum stressed civic nationalism and "the pursuit of preserving the democratic and sovereign status quo" (Liu & Li, 2017, p.369); this is expounded upon by Weng (2017) and Wu & Lin (2019) who argue that younger generations are post-materialistic since they grew up during a time of relative prosperity (Weng, 2017, p.378; Wu & Lin, 2019, p.397). The rise in post-materialism in Taiwan echoes Inglehart's (1981) finding that post-materialism has grown in materially developed states, the reason being that the continued fulfilment of one's base

physiological needs —food, shelter, etc.— does not produce a sense of satisfaction in the long-run, thus leading such individuals to seek satisfaction via post-material means (Inglehart, 1981, pp.881-882; Maslow, 1954), and Strenze (2021) —albeit through an analysis of materially developed Western countries— suggests that political values have indeed become more post-materialistic (Strenze, 2021, p.14). The respondents were coded as per Chang & Wang (2005) and Liu & Li's (2017) generational typology: 0 is the baseline category and includes the 1st and 2nd generations as there are not too many of these generation due to aging; successive generations were coded in increments of 1, e.g. 3rd generation is coded as 2, and the 4th is coded as 3.

Independent Variable (X2): Party Affinity

Taiwan's parties can be broadly categorized into one of two categories: the pro-reunification pan-Blues, and the pro-independence pan-Greens (Wang, 2013, p.2). One's party affinity is a key predictor of their stance regarding Taiwan's political status, with pan-Blue supporters being more likely to support reunification while pan-Greens are more likely to support independence (Chen, 2014 p.542; Pew Research Center, 2020, p.6; Wang, 2013, p.10), and this is partly a consequence of the identity politics between the pro-Chinese and pro-Taiwanese parties (Chen, 2014, p.538). It is important to distinguish between party affinity and one's national identity, however, as someone who identifies as Taiwanese could be a pan-Blue supporter (Momesso & Lee, 2017, p.469). The respondents were coded into one of two groups: 0 are all pro-reunification parties (Pan-Blue), while 1 refers to all pro-independence parties (Pan-Green).

Independent Variable (X3): Economic Outlook

The intensification of cross-strait economic activity since 2010 has meant that Taiwan is increasingly dependent on China for its economic prosperity (Liu & Li, 2017, p.266). As such, those who are positively impacted by cross-strait economic exchanges are noted to desire greater

relations with, and economic access into, China rather than independence (Huang, 2019, p.103; Momesso & Lee, 2017, p.469); but this may be limited by the previously mentioned growth of post-materialism in Taiwan, especially amongst the younger generations. The respondents were recoded into one of three groups: 0 is that the economy stayed the same, 1 is that it improved, and 2 is that it worsened. The hypothesis regarding the impact of economic outlook is the following:

H1: Those with a positive outlook regarding the impact of cross-strait activity will be more likely to support reunification, and less likely to support independence, relative to the status quo.

Independent Variable (X4): Political Regime Preferences

The Taiwanese people, especially the younger generations, are noted to desire the survival and continuation of their democratic system (Weng, 2017, p.378; Wu & Lin, 2019, p.397). As such, those who express greater preference for democracy over other political regimes could be less supportive of reunification. The respondents were recoded into one of three groups: 0 is indifference, 1 is that authoritarian can be preferable to democracy, and 2 is that democracy is the best system.

Independent Variable (X5): National Identity

A sense of national identity influences Taiwanese perceptions regarding their political status, as those who identity as Taiwanese are more likely to support independence while those who identify as Chinese are more supportive of reunification (Wu & Lin, 2019, p.406). The respondents were recoded into one of three groups: 0 refers to those with dual identity, 1 refers to those with a Taiwanese identity, and 2 refers to those with a Chinese identity.

Independent Variable (X6): Sex

A respondent's sex is noted to impact their attitudes on China, as males are more likely to hold favourable attitudes when compared to females (Liu & Li, 2017, p.273). The respondents were recoded into one of two groups: 0 is male, while 1 is female.

Independent Variable (X7): Education

Tzeng et al. (2017) and Wu & Lin (2019) suggest that less educated respondents are more likely to hold negative perceptions of China when compared to highly educated respondents (Tzeng et al., 2017, p.29; Wu & Lin, 2019, p.407), thus less educated respondents could be less supportive of reunification. The respondents were recoded into one of four groups: 0 being those with a junior high school degree of lower, 1 being those with a high school degree, 2 being those with a college degree, and 3 being those who have a university degree or higher. The hypothesis regarding the impact of education is the following:

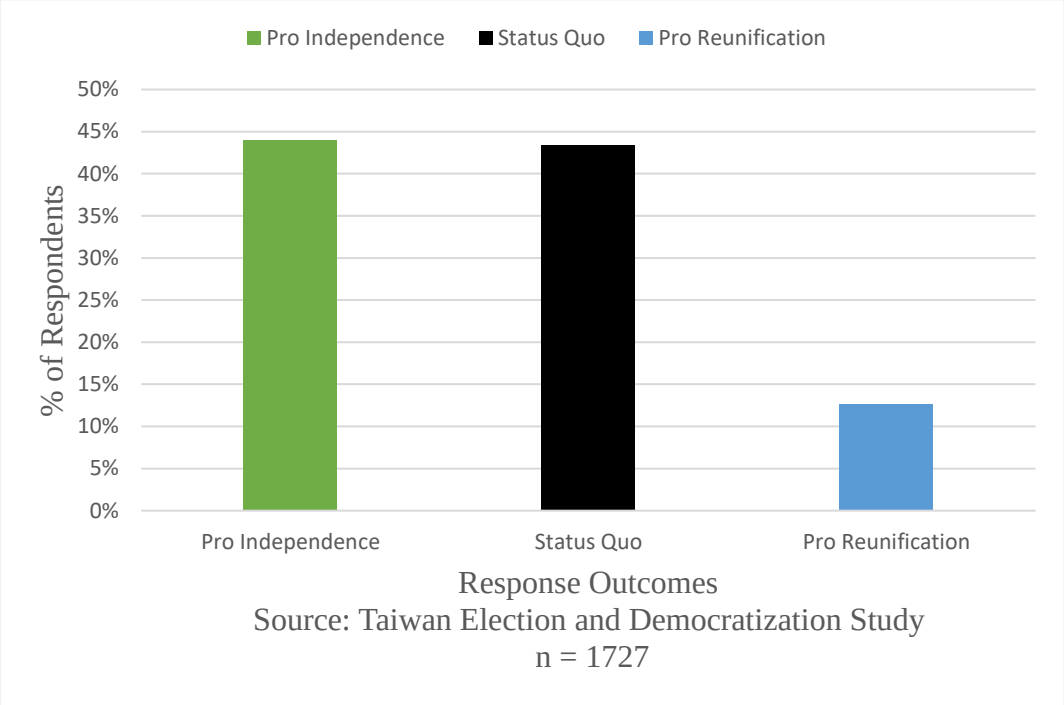
H2: Greater education will reduce support to independence, and increase support to reunification, relative to the status quo.

Results

Figure 2 presents the percentage breakdown of the respondents' aggregate stance on Taiwan's political status, and it suggests that the majority support independence and the continuation status quo (44% and 43% respectively), while only a minority support reunification with China (13%).

Figure 2

Respondent's Stance on Taiwan's Political Status, in 2021



Multinomial Logistic Regression

Tables 1 and 2 provide the results of the multinomial logistic regression: it suggests that the variables which influences a respondent's pro-independence preferences are associated with party affinity, political regime preferences, and identity, while the variables for preferring reunification are associated with party affinity, generations, and identity.

Table 1

Multinomial Logistics Analysis of Pro-Independence Stance Relative to the Status Quo

Variables & Categories		**Pro Independence**			
	N	**Coeff**	**(S.E.)**	**Margins**	**% Change**
Party Affinity					
Pan-Blues	634	-	-	0.15	-
Pan-Greens	1093	2.10***	0.18	0.56	41%

Variables & Categories		Pro Independence			
	N	Coeff	(S.E.)	Margins	% Change
Sex					
Male	871	-	-	0.43	-
Female	856	0.15	0.12	0.45	2%
Education					
Junior High School	352	-	-	0.43	-
High School	464	-0.17	0.19	0.41	-2%
College	223	-0.04	0.24	0.42	-1%
University+	688	0.25	0.21	0.47	4%
Generations					
1st & 2nd	301	-	-	0.40	-
3rd	512	0.23	0.20	0.45	5%
4th	342	0.08	0.23	0.43	3%
5th	297	0.24	0.24	0.46	6%
6th	275	0.16	0.25	0.45	5%
Economic Outlook					
Same	204	-	-	0.45	-
Better	484	0.11	0.21	0.47	2%
Worse	1039	-0.22	0.19	0.42	-5%
Political Regime Preferences					
Doesn't Matter	292	-	-	0.33	-
Authoritarianism	503	0.53**	0.20	0.42	9%
Democracy	932	0.83***	0.18	0.48	15%
Identity					
Dual	555	-	-	0.29	-
Taiwanese	1090	1.06***	0.16	0.49	20%
Chinese	82	-0.26	0.60	0.22	-7%

Margins = Marginal Effects (with base category: Status Quo).

Coeff = Regression Coefficient; S.E. = Standard Error

* = P-value ≤ 0.05; ** = P-value ≤ 0.01; *** = P-value ≤ 0.001

Table 2

Multinomial Logistics Analysis of Pro-Reunification Stance Relative to the Status Quo

Variables & Categories		Pro Unification			
	N	Coeff	(S.E.)	Margins	% Change
Party Affinity					
Pan-Blues	634	-	-	0.20	-

Pan-Greens	1093	-1.16***	0.25	0.05	-15%

Variables & Categories		Pro Unification			
	N	Coeff	(S.E.)	Margins	% Change
Sex					
Male	871	-	-	0.14	-
Female	856	-0.22	0.18	0.12	-2%
Education					
Junior High School	352	-	-	0.11	-
High School	464	0.06	0.26	0.12	1%
College	223	0.42	0.30	0.15	4%
University+	688	0.25	0.27	0.13	2%
Generations					
1st & 2nd	301	-	-	0.19	-
3rd	512	-0.38	0.22	0.15	-4%
4th	342	-0.86***	0.27	0.11	-8%
5th	297	-1.45***	0.35	0.07	-12%
6th	275	-1.50***	0.43	0.06	-13%
Economic Outlook					
Same	204	-	-	0.12	-
Better	484	0.11	0.32	0.13	1%
Worse	1039	-0.01	0.29	0.13	1%
Political Regime Preferences					
Doesn't Matter	292	-	-	0.14	-
Authoritarianism	503	0.29	0.23	0.15	1%
Democracy	932	-0.27	0.23	0.10	-4%
Identity					
Dual	555	-	-	0.14	-
Taiwanese	1090	-0.55*	0.23	0.08	-6%
Chinese	82	1.20***	0.27	0.32	18%

Margins = Marginal Effects (with base category: Status Quo).
Coeff = Regression Coefficient; S.E. = Standard Error
* = P-value ≤ 0.05; ** = P-value ≤ 0.01; *** = P-value ≤ 0.001

Hypothesis Testing

H1: This hypothesis cannot be supported as respondents' economic outlook had no statistically significant impact on their stance regarding Taiwan's political status. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

H2: There were no statistically significant impacts regarding higher education. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

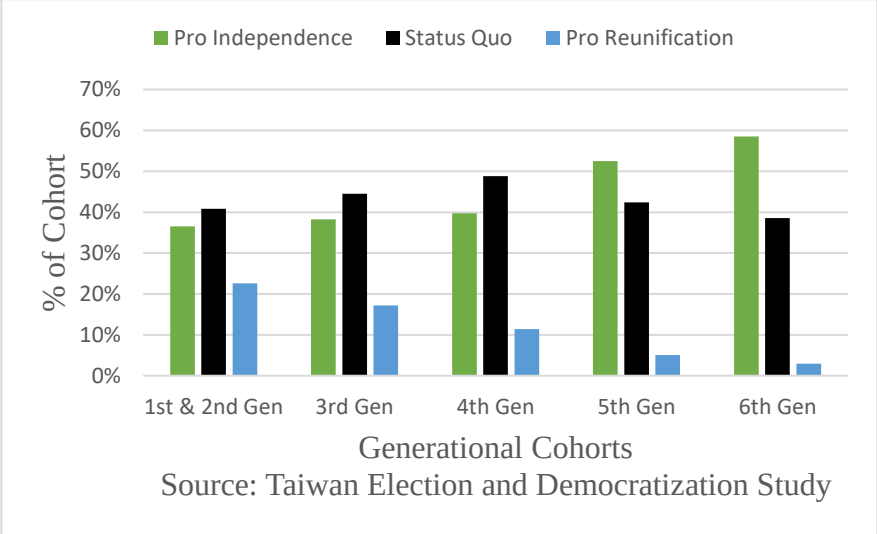
Implications for Taiwan's Win-Sets

At present, the data suggests that continuation of the status quo and independence are supported at the domestic level, as 44%, 43% and 13% of respondents prefer independence, status quo and reunification, respectively. This suggests that Taiwan's win-sets permits the continuation of the status quo and independence, and this may reduce the likelihood of a cross-strait war as Taipei could pragmatically decide to continue the status quo. This being said, however, cross-strait tensions could ignite in the future as generational differences, in the form of a growing Taiwanese identity and support to pan-Greens seen in younger generations, erode domestic support for the continuation of the status quo as well as electoral support for the pan-Blues which leaves independence as the sole remaining win-set for Taiwan under pan-Green governments.

Figure 3 suggest that: the proportion of respondents who prefer reunification with China is decreasing with each successive generation; the proportion of respondents who prefer independence is more prevalent with each successive generation; support for status quo, while it did increase between between the 1st and 4th generations, are decreasing in the 5th and 6th generations.

Figure 3

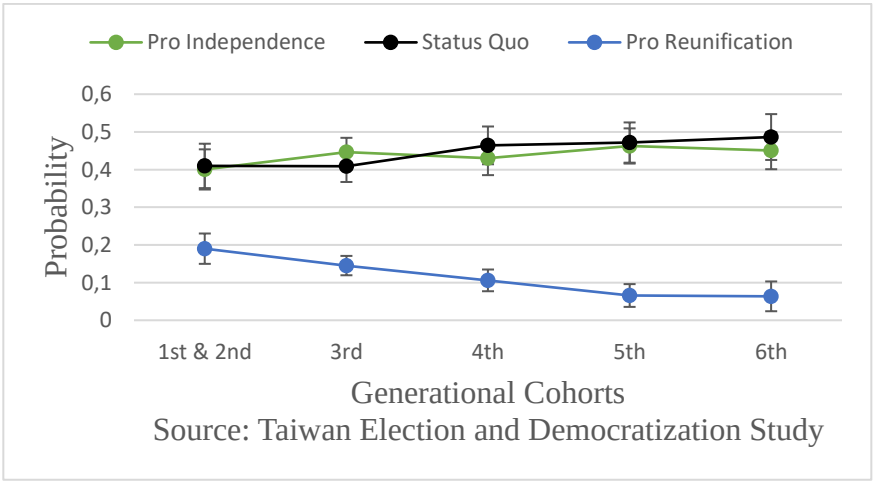
Generational Stance on Taiwan's Political Status, in 2021



The growing support to independendence cannot be attributed to generational differences per se, however, as the results of the regression were not statistically significant. Figure 4 presents the marginal effects of generations, and it suggests that the effect of generations are inconclusive regarding support to either the status quo or independence.

Figure 4

Marginal Probabilities of Taiwan's Political Status by Generational Cohort, in 2021 with 95% Confidence Interval



Instead, Figure 5 and Figure 6 suggest that the drivers of changing generational preferences may stem from the high prevalence of a Taiwanese identity as well as pan-Green affinity amongst younger generations; and identity and party affinity is likely to be stable throughout a respondents' lifetime as per the theory of generational change.

Figure 5

Respondent's Identity by Generational Cohort, in 2021

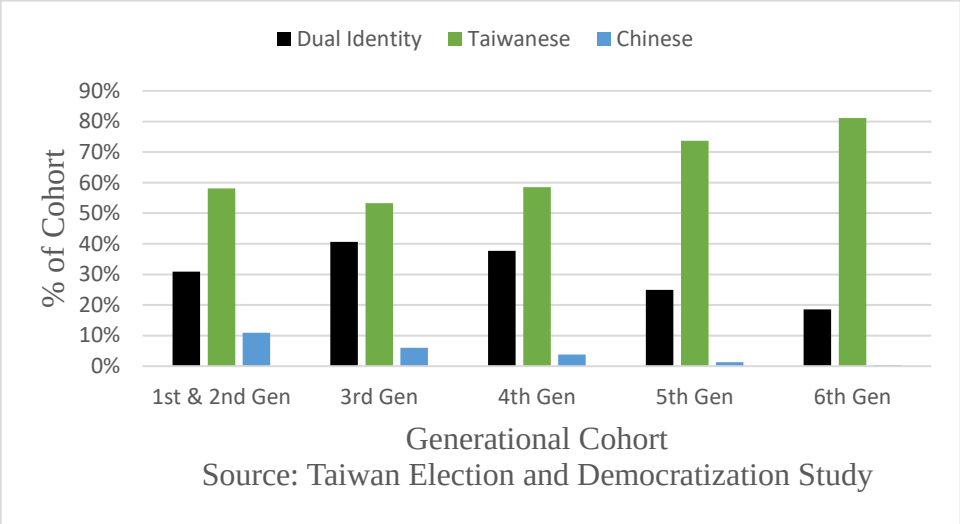
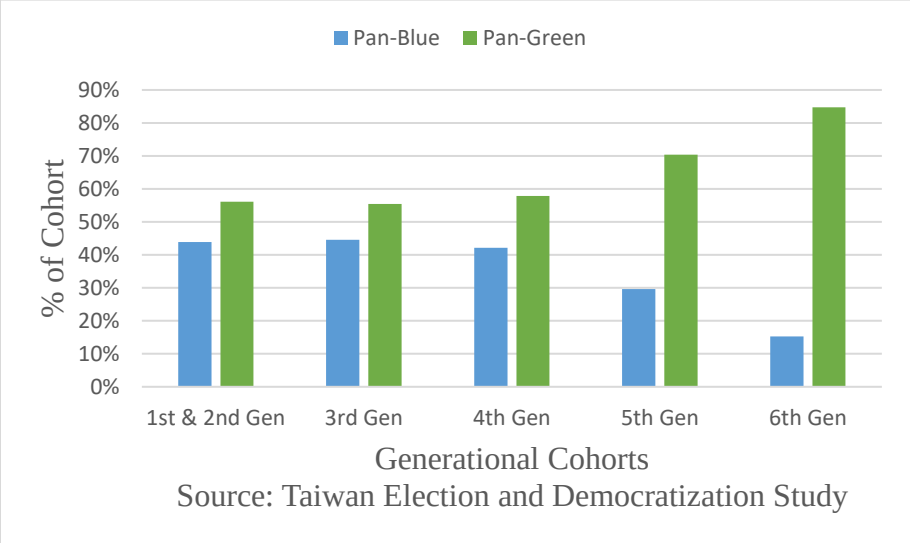


Figure 6

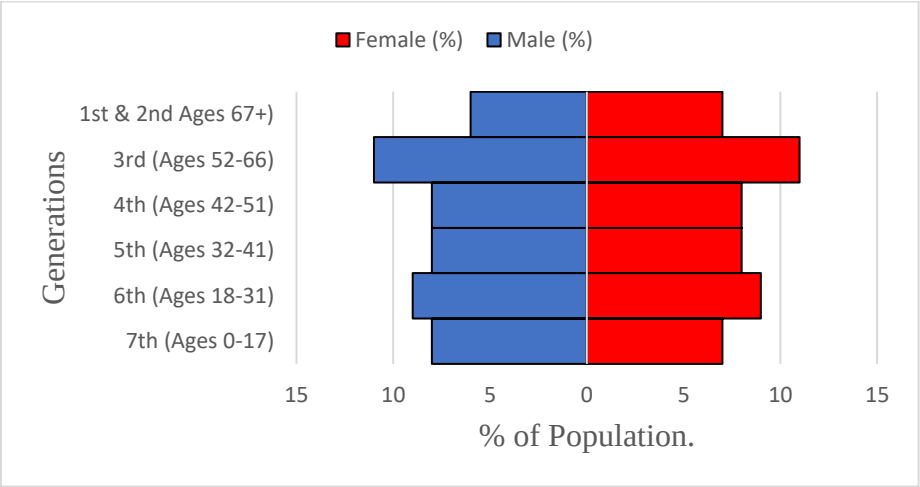
Respondent's Partisan Affinity by Generational Cohort, in 2021



Furthermore, Figure 7 presents Taiwan's population pyramid derived through the use of the Taiwanese government's statistics (Ministry of the Interior, 2020).

Figure 7

Taiwan's Population Pyramid by Generations, 2020



The population pyramid suggests that younger generations —such as the 6th— will replace the older generations over the next 30 years. When coupled with the growth in the Taiwanese identity and pan-Green affinity in younger generations, it suggests that Taiwan's status quo win-set will be increasingly unfeasible due to a lack of domestic support. In so doing, this could prove highly destabilizing to cross-strait relations if these voters exert pressure on the pro independnece pan-Green to pursue independence, especially when considering that the majority of Taiwanese perceive that the U.S. would intervene on behalf of Taiwan's defence in the event of a formal declaration of de jure sovereignty (Hickey, 2020). The Taiwanese perception that the U.S. would intervene is problematic, as this reduces the credibility of China's threat to invade should Taiwan pursue formal independence, and even should China invade, the perception of a U.S. intervention reduces the seriousness of China's threat; this concern is echoed by Kastner (2006), who caution that a strong U.S. commitment to Taiwan's defence could see the U.S. entrapped in a cross-strait

conflict should Taiwan, confident in the U.S.' involvement, make a push for formal independence (Kastner, 2006, p.658).

Taiwan's Cross-Strait Options, Win-Sets, International Considerations, and Preferences

Taipei has 3 options: the pursuit of formal independence, reunification with China, or the maintenance of the status quo. At present, Taiwan has two win-sets as 44% and 43% of Taiwanese support the pursuit of formal independence and the maintenance of the status quo, respectively. The Taiwanese government's ranked preferences under a pan-Green government are 1) independence, and 2) status quo; while a pan-Blue government's preferences are 1) status quo, and 2) independence. While independence is the most preferred option under a pan-Green government, Taiwan's diplomatic estrangement coupled with the threat of a Chinese invasion should Taiwan pursue independence leads to the continuance of the status quo. While a pan-Blue government would continue the status quo as it's their preferred outcome out of the two possible win-sets. Afterwards, China and the U.S. will both choose acceptance on their part following the logic in Section I. However, the regression and descriptive statistics suggest that younger generations of Taiwanese —who perceive themselves as Taiwanese and affiliate with the pan-Green— will be unsupportive of the status quo and the pan-Blues, as a result, independence is the only win-set remaining and the pan-Greens could be the government. The follow-up question is whether Taiwan will translate its desire for independence into concrete action.

Should Taiwan under a pan-Green government press forward with the pursuit of Taiwanese independence, then nationalism and the PLA will pressure the CCP to act against Taiwan, and tough actions will be preferred: 1) invade; 2) missile strikes; 3) blockade; 4) geo-economics and a diplomatic offensive. Without U.S. intervention, Taiwan has little prospect of survival against a determined Chinese assault, thus, Taiwan will opt for the undesired status quo rather than a suicidal

pursuit of independence which will ultimately cost them their de facto independence. However, the Taiwanese perception that the U.S. would intervene (Hickey, 2020) changes the underlying rationale, as U.S. intervention in defence of Taiwan enables the Taiwanese to pursue independence with the confidence that they will survive China's retaliation due to U.S. support (Kastner, 2006, p.658); in so doing, this carries the risk of triggering a hegemonic war over Taiwan. Thus, the next section will discuss potential solutions, and their feasability for Taiwan, China, and the U.S.

Section III: Prospects of a Hegemonic War, Potential Solutions, and their Feasability

Section I argued that the prospect that Taiwan could trigger a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war is conditional upon Taiwan's decision, and that Taiwanese voter preferences regarding their country's political status are a crucial factor shaping Taiwan's future decision (Wang, 2013, p.1). Therefore, Section II examined the domestic-level drivers and trends of Taiwanese preferences regarding their country's political status, and the findings suggests that Taiwan's status quo win-set will grow increasingly unfeasible due to the growth in the Taiwanese identity and pan-Green affinity in younger generations. These dynamics suggest that Taiwan may only have one win-set —independence— and be under a pan-Green government; while future generations of Taiwanese, armed with the confidence that the U.S. will intervene on their behalf (Hickey, 2020), pressure the pan-Green government to pursue their desired outcome of Taiwanese independence. This will likely trigger the onset of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan as the CCP is pressured to invoke the 2005 Anti-Secession Law by a combination of nationalist sentiments and military pressure, and the U.S. will intervene on behalf of Taiwan due to bi-partisan and President-Congress consensus regarding the need to check China, the U.S. public's disdain for China, the need to maintain U.S. credibility,

and the trend of U.S. relations with China and Taiwan. This would mark the onset of a war between the China and the U.S. over Taiwan. Thus, are there potential solutions which could dampen the risk of a conflict?

The current framework of cross-strait relations, ceteris paribus, does not have a potential solution as Taiwan only has three options: Independence, status quo, or reunify. Support for the status quo is shrinking, while reunification —be it under Chinese sovereignty or a form of one country, two systems— is unlikely due to Taiwanese concerns over their sovereignty and democracy (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p.48). In addition, while the one country, two systems model was the status quo between Beijing and the Taiwanese President Ma's administration, the continued credibility and acceptability of this model is negligible given Beijing's crackdown against Hong Kong (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p.48). As a result, independence is the sole remaining win-set for Taiwan with all its attending risks. Therefore, innovation is required to increase the number of acceptable win-sets to Taiwan under a pan-Green government (Tsebelis, 1990, p.8), as a greater number of win-sets facilitates a peaceful international outcome (Noone, 2019, p.169). On this front, Kuo & Myers (2014), Lai (2020), and Tsang (2014) provide three potential options: A brotherhood framework, a commonwealth, or a confederation.[1]

A brotherhood framework is predicated on a shared ethnic-identity between China and Taiwan. China —as the big brother— would recognize Taiwan's statehood and help it obtain its former statehood and membership into international organizations. Taiwan would become an independent state and permitted to pursue its own diplomatic initiatives, but would cooperate with China on areas of mutual concern such as pollution (Lai, 2020, p.185). A commonwealth would

[1] The three options could, but are not, present in the current framework due to China's insistence on its One China principle (Lai, 2020, p.27).

see China and Taiwan join a political union as equal partners, with each controlling their respective territories while pledging non-interference in the other's internal affairs; the two states would maintain their own militaries, but take steps to demilitarize the Taiwan Strait, and integrate their market economies. Taiwan, however, would become a neutral state, meaning that it cannot join any alliance systems, but in return, Taiwan can join international organizations as the Republic of China, and pursue its own diplomatic relations (Kuo & Myers, 2004, p.191). Confederation would enable Taiwan to share sovereignty with China, while enabling it to function as a sovereign state in international relations. Under a confederation, neither China nor Taiwan could interfere in the other's domestic affairs, and both would be permitted to maintain their own armed forces. Taiwan can conduct international relations with a title that designates it as part of a Chinese confederacy, but China will take the lead in international relations and Taiwan would be unable to vote against or undermine China in international bodies (Tsang, 2004, pp.203-206).

The three new options offer a compromise between Taiwanese independence and nominal unification with China: it provides greater flexibility to Taiwan's regarding its political status by offering various ways to express independence and autonomy, while appeasing China by maintaining Taiwan as part of a Greater One China —be it a brotherhood, commonwealth, or confederation. The addition of these new options provides some preliminary thoughts on stabilizing what could be an increasingly risky Taiwan-China relations, and further research is required to examine how these options would be implemented in practice and assess its feasibility in both the Taiwanese and Chinese publics. Nevertheless, the options are likely to be acceptable win-sets for Taiwan as it grants the island various degrees of sovereignty and political autonomy from China, but independence will likely remain the top choice as it maximizes Taiwanese sovereignty and autonomy vis-à-vis China.

As such, the U.S. must get involved as the shift towards strategic clarity under the Trump and Biden administrations —which increases U.S. commitments to Taiwan (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.45-46)— does little but raise the risk of conflict. The current framework is imbalanced due to growing uncertainties about Taiwan's political status coupled with China's rise, and an increase in American coercive threats against China only emboldens Taiwan while triggering concerns in Beijing about Washington's intent (Beinart, 2021; Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.54–55). China's return to the world stage is not a problem to be fixed; it is a condition which must be managed to prevent the outbreak of a potential hegemonic war (Allison, 2017, p.11). In so doing, the U.S. must work to defuse the situation in the Taiwan Strait by revising U.S. defence commitments to Taiwan to encourage the adoption of the new possible options rather than independence: the U.S. must make clear that it will not intervene should a Chinese invasion be provoked by Taiwanese independence, but that it will intervene should an invasion be unprovoked. This informs Taiwan that U.S. defence commitments are not a carte blanche with which to pursue independence, as the prospect of U.S. intervention would be bounded to non-independence options.

China must also broaden its conception of the One China principle for the new options to work (Lai, 2020, p.27). The current One China principle —that both Taiwan and mainland China are under the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China (Wang et al., 2021, p.214)— leaves little room for cross-strait negotiation and provides Taiwan little options regarding its political status (Lai, 2020, pp.178-179). While this may have been beneficial insofar as dissuading Taiwan's pursuit of independence through the threat of war (Xiying, 2021, p.552), coercion has its limits and is not a sound long-term strategy since Taiwan can choose to resist (Allan et al., 2018, p.845), especially as the Taiwanese perceive that the U.S. will intervene on their behalf (Hickey, 2020;

Kastner, 2006, p.652). Moravcsik (1993) notes that the player with the most constrained win-set, i.e., Taiwan, enjoys greater leverage and influence over the outcome, but this is ultimately conditional on whether both China and Taiwan desire to reach a peaceful outcome (Moravcsik, 1993, p.28).

Taiwan, under a revised U.S. defence commitment, could prefer a peaceful outcome as it prevents the outbreak of war: Taiwan would lose against China without U.S. intervention, thereby leading to the loss of their sovereignty. Furthermore, a peaceful outcome could be preferred by China as: it reduces the likelihood that a cross-strait conflict would occur, thereby permitting Beijing to pursue its economic growth and interests without the interruption of a war; aids the credibility of China's peaceful development rhetoric by signalling to concerned states that Beijing is amiable to compromises and negotiations (Lai, 2020, p.198), rather than its current coercive approach as in the South China sea dispute (Kaplan et al, 2020). In addition, the CCP could use its control over information, budgets, and agenda-setting to build support amongst its citizens and the PLA that a broadened One China is the most effective policy to reunify with Taiwan as part of a greater One China (Moravcsik, 1993, p.15); and Beijing should be hesitant about invading Taiwan as the island's history is replete with a tradition of resisting foreign occupiers (Hsu, 1980a, p.15; Hsu, 1980b, p.85; Wang, 1980, pp.42-44), and it is possible that pro-democratic Taiwanese forces will engage in a guerrilla struggle against China.

Conclusion

This paper examined the prospect that a hegemonic war could occur between China and the U.S. over Taiwan. In so doing, this paper operated under the following parameters: a) China's 2005 Anti-Secession Law represent a strategic move as the triggers for war are dependent on Taiwan's actions (Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991, p.100); b) Taipei has the first move and faces three

options —the pursuit of formal independence, reunification with China, or the maintenance of the status quo; c) Beijing will then respond to Taipei's decision; d) and Washington will then decide whether to get involved, or not.

Section I examined the potential options available to Taiwan, China, and the U.S., their win-sets, and the international level considerations that each country faces. It argues that the prospect that Taiwan could become a flashpoint for a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war is conditional upon Taiwan's decision: if it seeks independence, then China would likely invade due to domestic forces, and the U.S. would subsequently intervene to maintain the credibility of its international commitments given its growing negative perception of China. Section II explored the preferences of the Taiwanese voters since they shape the feasibility of any option at the international level, and the results suggest that a pan-Green government elected by future generations Taiwanese could increasingly pursue independence over all other possible outcomes due to growing Taiwanese identity and pan-Green partisan affinity. Section III assessed the prospect of a hegemonic war over Taiwan and argued that the existing framework, ceteris paribus, is likely to trigger a Sino-U.S. hegemonic war as support for the status quo in Taiwan is weakening; this raises the risk of a hegemonic war over Taiwan as a Chinese invasion may be triggered by a future Taiwanese push for independence.

Clark (2012), in his analysis of how Europe entered the Armageddon of the First World War, argues that the decision-makers were "sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world" (Clark 2012, p.562). The contemporary situation in China, Taiwan, and the U.S. seems to echo Clark's (2012) argument: China is watchful of Taiwan as they are haunted by the prospect that it could separate from them (Christen, 2002, p.12), yet unseeing of how Beijing's coercive actions, rhetoric, and

dealings with Hong Kong are stoking concerns in Taiwan about reunification (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, p.48; Chen, 2014, p.543); Taiwan is watchful of China, haunted by the threat to their sovereignty, respect, and democracy (Gries & Su, 2013, p.95; Wu & Lin, 2019, p.397), but unseeing of how the Taiwan issue is also one of sovereignty and respect for China as they instead blame it on Chinese arrogance and bullying (Gries & Su, 2013, p.95); the U.S. is watchful of China and haunted by the specter of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, yet unseeing of how increasing American defence commitments to Taiwan raises the risk of a cross-strait conflict (Beinart, 2021; Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.46-48).

George Santayana (2015), in a rebuke to U.S. President Wilson's comment that the First World War was "the war to end all wars" (Knock, 2019, p.262), wrote that "only the dead have seen the end of war" (Santayana, 2015, p.53). War, however, is a deliberate choice by which a political objective is pursued by military means (Callum, 2001, p.61; Reiter, 2003, p.28). As such, the choice can always be made to prevent it. Potential solutions that can reduce the risk of war do exist in the form of a brotherhood framework, commonwealth, or a confederation. In doing so, China must broaden its One China principle to permit these additional options which could be conducive to Beijing's own interests since it would possibly prevent the outbreak of war, maintain Taiwan as part of a Greater One China, and lend credibility to Beijing's peaceful development rhetoric (Lai, 2020, p.198). The U.S. must also revise its current shift towards strategic clarity, as the associated increase in U.S. commitments to Taiwan does little but raise the risk of conflict (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021, pp.45-46). Instead, the U.S. should revise its defence commitments to Taiwan in order to encourage the adoption of the new possible non-independence options. While these changes are not guaranteed to prevent the outbreak of conflict, the current framework and

trajectory of cross-strait relations carry a serious risk of triggering a hegemonic war; and efforts should be undertaken by all parties to prevent it.

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