

Navigating Power Dynamics: The Taiwan-U.S. Smart Partnership and Its Effects on China

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ABSTRACT

The strategic partnership between Taiwan and the United States has profound implications for China, which perceives it as a direct challenge to its national security and sovereignty. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the geopolitical ramifications of the Taiwan-US Smart Partnership on China. Specifically, it examines the partnership's effects across multiple dimensions, including shared political values, strategic alliances, economic interdependencies, and China's geopolitical responses. Employing a qualitative research approach, this study synthesizes secondary data from academic sources, including theses, peer-reviewed journal articles, and credible online publications. The concept of national security serves as the analytical framework to interpret the broader implications of this partnership. The findings illustrate the multifaceted impacts of the Taiwan-US collaboration on China's political, economic, and security landscape. Politically, the partnership challenges China's "One China" principle, enhances Taiwan's international presence, and exerts diplomatic pressure on Beijing to reconsider its stance on cross-strait relations. Economically, the collaboration facilitates supply chain diversification, diminishing China's economic leverage and necessitating strategic policy adaptations. From a technological perspective, joint initiatives between Taiwan and the US safeguard intellectual property rights, stimulate innovation, and counteract China's advancements in critical technologies. In the realm of security, the partnership strengthens Taiwan's defence posture, deters potential Chinese military interventions, and contributes to regional stability. In response to these developments, China has implemented a range of countermeasures, including diplomatic recalibrations, military modernization efforts, assertive maneuvers in the South China Sea, and engagement in economic conflicts such as the US-China trade war. Understanding these strategic responses is essential for assessing the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Indo-Pacific and its long-term implications for China's political, economic, and security structures.

Keywords: *China, Economy, Partnership, Taiwan, The US*

Introduction

The partnerships between Taiwan and the US significantly impacted China, particularly with significant implications for regional and global security. Additionally, this chapter analysed the implications in politics, economy, and security for China. This partnership gave more benefits to Taiwan and the US. However, the possibility of Chinese countermoves restricted further US development of Taiwanese ties (Blackwill et al. 2021). Taiwan-US relations have become a major power with far-reaching effects, particularly on China. China's internal and

international landscape has been transformed by the Taiwan-US smart partnership's multifarious partnerships in politics, economics, and security. Taiwan-US collaboration has challenged China's "One China" policy and pressured Beijing to accept Taiwan's objectives (Green et al.2017). Taiwan's incorporation into the global supply chain, boosted by its US cooperation, has diversified supply lines away from China, eroding its economic dominance and compelling it to change its strategy. Taiwan's defensive capabilities have increased, and China's military planning has become more unpredictable, restricting its alternatives and changing regional strategic calculations (Kato, 2021). This cooperation shapes power dynamics and strategic concerns while challenging China's politics, economy, and security. However, the US and Taiwan have been able to collaborate successfully, which has resulted in a number of positive outcomes for both countries. Taiwan has had a close relationship with the US for many years, and the US has been a reliable friend of Taiwan in the areas of politics, economy, and defence (Mustakim Ismail et al., 2021). Despite the absence of formal diplomatic links between the US and Taiwan, which was passed into law by the US Congress in 1979, ensures that the two nations will continue to have a strong relationship (Janson, 2019). This act serves as the cornerstone of the healthy bilateral relations between Taiwan and the US, confirming America's commitment to Taiwan's security and well-being.

Governance and Power Dynamics

The Taiwan-US smart partnership has helped challenge China's "One China" policy and pressured Beijing to change its cross-strait policies (Chen, 2014). By conducting high-level official contacts and allowing arms sales to Taiwan, the US has shown significant political and diplomatic support for Taiwan (Ching, 2019). This continuous support has strengthened Taiwan's political standing and autonomy, giving it a stronger international voice. Thus, China has been under pressure to accommodate Taiwan's goals and handle the rising worldwide acknowledgment of Taiwan's distinct identity (Hsiao et al., 2023). The Taiwan-US cooperation has given Taiwan more weight in negotiations with China, prompting Beijing to rethink its strategy (Kuehn, 2021). Thus, this collaboration has shaped China's political landscape, potentially affecting its unification efforts and regional impact. The contentious political matters between China and Taiwan revolved around highly sensitive issues like sovereignty and identity. As a consequence, both sides were unwilling to reach a compromise that fully satisfied the other, leading to an ongoing state of conflict without a resolution. Nonetheless, in this persistent confrontation between China and Taiwan, varying degrees of confrontation were observed at different times (Chen, 2014). By considering "a high level of confrontation" as instances characterized by numerous unilateral actions against each other with minimal bilateral efforts to address shared issues and "a low level of confrontation" as situations involving relatively more bilateral efforts and fewer unilateral actions, it is evident that China-Taiwan relations experienced periods of both high and low confrontation.

In an era of China's growing influence, international politics appears to be increasingly driven by a zero-sum competition for power. While China had experienced weakness in the past due to the expansion of imperialist forces in Japan, Russia, and Europe, it now perceives itself as a rightful claimant demanding justice and pushing back against foreign intrusions (Friedman, 1997). Beijing claimed Taiwan politics revealed the plotters. Beijing's new revanchist view saw Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui as loyal to Japan and leveraging American influence (Chang, 2007). Beijing believed America's fall meant it would never dominate Asia. Thus, Beijing aimed to prevent Japan from recolonizing Taiwan and

regaining Asian hegemony. China-Taiwan relations may have entered a new age of partnership and rivalry, love and hate, increased confidence, and persistent anxiety. Beijing and Taipei are "frenemies," competitive and distrustful of each other, but certain that collaboration (whether weak or deceptive) serves their respective (and often contradicting) agendas more than overt enmity (Tubilewicz, 2012). This issue contributes to a broader debate on the frenemy pattern of cooperation and conflict over contentious global issues re-emerging in different arenas and guises. Beijing's interactions with key partners like the US, Japan, and India, or Washington's relations with West and South Asia, are complex.

Strengthening ties between Taiwan and the US puts greater diplomatic pressure on China. The US encourages global participation on the part of Taiwan as well as membership in international organisations (Hsiao et al., 2023). The pressure put on China to resolve Taiwan's international position and communicate calmly is increased by the support it receives from the US and other nations that share its perspective. The relationship between Taiwan and the US may have a number of different effects on China. Taiwan has gained international attention due to its strong relationship with the US. US backing for Taiwan affects other nations due to its global influence and alliances (A. P. Li, 2022). Countries show their desire to engage with Taiwan as a genuine state apart from China by establishing diplomatic relations or supporting its international involvement (Hsiu- C.W, 2018). This recognition affects China. China refuses to recognise Taiwan as an independent nation. However, more countries recognising Taiwan or supporting its participation in international organisations undermines China's diplomatic isolation of Taiwan. Taiwan's increasing worldwide recognition undermines China's diplomatic isolation. China has pressured nations to follow the "One China" policy, limiting Taiwan's participation in international forums (Green et al., 2017). More countries are eager to cooperate with Taiwan bilaterally and multilaterally as they recognise Taiwan's distinctive contributions and expertise.

Taiwan-US relations help offset China's global dominance (Hu, 2016). Taiwan is able to assert its global interests and strengthen its worldwide footprint through this alliance, restricting China's economic and political efforts to marginalise Taiwan (Ezell, 2021). Taiwan's close connection with the US allows it to participate in international affairs and promote its interests actively. As a global superpower, the US has alliances and relationships with many nations. By standing with Taiwan and actively supporting its interests, the US sends a clear message to other nations that it is dedicated to fighting China's efforts to isolate Taiwan and ensuring Taiwan's voice is heard (Blackwill et al., 2021). The alliance between Taiwan and the US inspires countries with similar perspectives to come together and present a unified front when confronting China's aggressive behaviour (Kato, 2021). These countries have the ability to collectively voice their concerns about China's conduct and advocate for the peaceful resolution of issues relating to Taiwan if they engage in coordinated diplomatic efforts. This united front puts China under diplomatic pressure, which forces the country to evaluate the potential repercussions of its actions (Shiing, 2022).

Taiwan and the US have tight connections, which can develop regional alliances and partnerships that help manage diplomatic issues in the Asia-Pacific region (Wang, 2015). The US maintains longstanding relationships with Japan, South Korea, and Australia, which share concerns about China's expanding power and assertiveness (Wuthnow, 2019). By strengthening ties with Taiwan, the US may coordinate with regional allies to respond to China's diplomatic actions. Taiwan has contributed to global organisations, conferences, and dialogues with US backing (Foster, 2021). Taiwan contributes its expertise and opposes China's supremacy by participating in various international venues. However, the US

backing for Taiwan's global involvement may cause diplomatic issues with China and reduce China's influence. Taiwan's exclusion from international organisations has long been disputed. Taiwan is often excluded from multilateral organisations and conferences due to China's resistance (Fong, 2022). With US support, Taiwan has overcome some of these restrictions and gained the possibility to participate in global talks.

Economic Structures and Market Dynamics

In the past decade, China and the US have grown increasingly in dispute over issues such as the South China Sea and Taiwan, and these conflicts have only intensified in the last few years (Ying et al., 2004). The conflict between the United States and China is intensifying, beginning with the trade war on economic and technological fronts during the Trump administration and spreading under the Biden administration into the realms of human rights, governance, and semiconductor competition (Hsu et al., 2021). As tensions have intensified and efforts to avoid conflict have persisted, the likelihood of the two countries becoming embroiled in a larger conflict has increased. China's economic dominance has been challenged by the Taiwan-US smart partnership's diversification of supply chains (Hsiao et al., 2023). Taiwan is a key supply chain actor due to its technological and economic capabilities (Momoko, 2022). Taiwan can now compete with China for vital supply chains thanks to its US alliance (A. P. Li, 2022). Taiwan has been a favoured partner for the US as it aims to minimise its reliance on China for critical industries and products due to its sophisticated manufacturing, innovation, and competitive advantages. China's economic power has been weakened by this shift in trade and investment (Foster, 2021). China must adjust to the changing economic dynamics in the region and alleviate the problems posed by the Taiwan-US relationship since other nations in the region may increase their economic engagement with Taiwan, further weakening China's economic power (Hsu et al., 2021).

The US continued to enhance its military sales and collaboration with Taiwan to discourage future aggression from China (Hass, 2022). The US defence sector gained greatly from arms sales to Taiwan. However, from a strategic perspective, selling armaments to Taiwan would not boost the military force and influence of the United States in the region. In addition, the majority of US-supplied weaponry to Taiwan has been defensive in nature too far (Ching, 2019). The true purpose of US arms sales to Taiwan is to undermine China's military capabilities and relative power position across the Taiwan Strait through a soft balancing policy (He et al. 2008). One US official argued that arms shipments to Taiwan were acceptable because "the balance of power was moving in China's favour across the Taiwan Strait," and the US sought to restore the balance. China faces significant economic challenges from the Taiwan-US smart partnership. Taiwan, known for its technology and innovation, is a worldwide supply chain player. Its tight economic links with the US have helped diversify its markets and minimise its dependence on China (Fuller, 2005). Taiwan and the US compete with China in economic growth and innovation through trade, investment, and technology cooperation (Momoko, 2022). Taiwan's economic strength has been promoted by the US in international economic organisations and trade agreements. Taiwan's rising international recognition as a separate economic entity undermines China's diplomatic and economic isolation of Taiwan (Fernandez, 2022). The US implicitly forces China to change its stance on Taiwan and recognise its economic importance by building economic relationships with Taiwan.

China's economy is impacted by the relations between Taiwan and the US. Taiwan is a significant player in the semiconductor industry, and its strong relations with the US have

led to advancements in the country's technology (Ezell, 2021). As a result of this agreement, Taiwan will become a preeminent supplier of essential components to companies operating in the global technology sector, including US companies (Andrews, 2006). It is possible that China will have a more difficult time obtaining sophisticated semiconductor technology and dominating certain industries. China's tremendous technical growth has been admired and feared worldwide. China has advanced in artificial intelligence, 5G telecommunications, quantum computing, and renewable energy, making it a worldwide innovation powerhouse. Taiwan and the US feel a sense of urgency to improve their technology capabilities and stay competitive (Mori, 2019). Taiwan and the US cooperate on intellectual property theft. Fair competition and innovation are threatened by China's intellectual property violations and forced technology transfers (Momoko, 2022). Taiwan and the US may adopt policies to preserve intellectual property rights and level the playing field for technology enterprises by working together. It will benefit both countries and promote fair competition globally.

In addition, the collaborative effort between Taiwan and the US is anticipated to have beneficial repercussions for the greater Indo-Pacific area. It is essential for countries that share similar values to work together and contribute to this region's prosperity, as it has recently emerged as an essential centre for technological advancement and economic expansion (Mastro, 2022). Taiwan and the US can develop a dynamic technological ecosystem that will stimulate entrepreneurship, attract investment, and drive economic success in the area if they foster tighter links with one another (Shattuck, 2021). This, in turn, has the potential to act as a counterbalance to the expanding power of China and contribute to the stability of the area. Taiwan and the US are collaboratively engaged in boosting technological competitiveness with China in response to China's rapid technological advancement. Concerns about intellectual property theft, the strategic imperative of preserving a competitive edge, and regional development drive it (Tu et al., 2023). Taiwan and the US collaborate to preserve intellectual property rights, improve technology, and progress the Indo-Pacific region. This alliance might boost innovation, economic growth, and global competitiveness in the face of China's technical superiority. Technology manufacturing and innovation have long been associated with Taiwan. It's home to TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker (Momoko, 2022). Taiwan is an attractive partner for the US in boosting technical competition with China due to its superior manufacturing, skilled workforce, and robust research and development ecosystem. Technology research, development, and entrepreneurship are strong in the US (Shattuck, 2021). In addition, China has expressed a desire for self-sufficiency in semiconductors and has invested heavily in its industry (Zhang, 2015). Taiwan and the US may collaborate to improve semiconductor manufacturing, research, and design. This collaborative effort could confer them a competitive edge and reduce their dependence on China.

Stability and Resilience Against Threats

China deems Taiwan a renegade province and may use force to annex it. Taiwan's security is enhanced through US-Taiwan cooperation in military technology, intelligence, and exercises (Hickey, 2013). This boosts Taiwan's defences and deters Chinese military attacks (Diamond et al., 2023). Taiwan's long-time friend, the US, is committed to its security and stability. Taiwan buys fighter jets and missile defence systems from the US under their alliance (Ching, 2019). This helps Taiwan retain a credible defensive posture and conveys a strong message to China that forceful change would have catastrophic implications (Foster, 2021). Enhancing Beijing's worldwide political sway and bolstering its military security greatly depends on China's arms sales and military collaboration with specific countries.

(Qingmin et al., 2001). The issue of weapons proliferation seeks to weaken China's dominant position and influence associated with the spread of weapons. The United States has taken measures to limit China's arms sales and technology transfers in regions where US interests are involved, using both bilateral pressure and cooperation with international organizations. The goal is to curb China's influence and control in such areas (Blanchette et al., 2022).

China's military plans and defence policy are uncertain because of the Taiwan-US smart partnership (Zhang, 2015). China and the US have long disputed Taiwan's critical Western Pacific location and advanced military capabilities (Mitchell, 2017). Security cooperation with Taiwan, including arms sales and cooperative military exercises, has shown the US's commitment to Taiwan Strait stability. This collaboration has strengthened Taiwan's defence and deterrence, reducing China's capacity to coerce or invade (Yuan, 2023). Thus, China's military plans must now consider a stronger deterrent force and the possibility of US involvement in any confrontation (Hu, 2016). The Taiwan-US relationship has complicated China's military policy and holds the potential to change regional power dynamics. The US and its allies have no intention of deliberately provoking China regarding the matter of Taiwan (A. P. Li, 2022). Nevertheless, China perceives a sense of threat arising from the evolving security dynamics in East Asia (Mitchell, 2017). The argument suggests that China will be worried about the US's deterrence capabilities strengthening through its alliance network. As a result of increased inter-alliance cooperation, China's military options could decrease, limiting its capacity to pose threats to Taiwan (Chen, 2018). Consequently, in the short term, China is likely to display reduced patience towards Taiwan and become more inclined to employ coercive threats to control Taiwan's actions, as such threats may compel Taiwan to align more closely with China's desired stance (Chen et al., 2022). In other words, China will be more inclined to resort to the use of force to achieve unification when it believes that its chances of success are high and secure.

Figure 1.1

Map Overview of the territorial claims in the South China Sea



Source: (Lewis et al., 2016)

The partnership between Taiwan and the United States carries security implications beyond the Taiwan Strait. China's actions in the South China Sea have been a cause of concern for neighbouring countries (Lewis et al., 2016). The map overview in **Figure 1.1** illustrates the territorial claims of China and Taiwan (in red), Vietnam (in blue), and the Philippines (in purple). Particularly, China has undertaken construction activities on seven reefs: Fieri Cross Reef, Cuarteron Reef, Hughes Reef, Gaven Reef, Johnson South Reef, Mischief Reef, and Subi Reef. These developments have raised alarms in the region due to their potential security implications.

The partnership between Taiwan and the US contributes to maintaining freedom of navigation, adherence to international law, and preserving stability in the South China Sea (Kim, 2017). This is crucial for regional security and prevents any unilateral attempts by China to control vital sea lanes. Moreover, the partnership between Taiwan and the US provides opportunities for broader regional cooperation in security matters (Yuan, 2023). The US has been actively engaging other countries in the region, such as Japan, Australia, and India, to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific (Satoru, 2021). Taiwan's inclusion in this cooperative framework enhances regional security by strengthening the network of like-minded nations committed to upholding the rules-based international order. China perceives Taiwan-US cooperation as threatening regional supremacy (Maizland, 2022). The US's assistance for Taiwan is seen as interference in its domestic affairs and a danger to its reunification goals. China has used diplomatic pressure and economic coercion to impede Taiwan-US official exchanges (Hu, 2016). In reaction to the Taiwan-US collaboration, China has boosted military activity near Taiwan, including air and naval patrols and military exercises simulating an invasion (Diamond et al., 2023). China further isolates Taiwan diplomatically by forcing countries to cut ties with Taipei and acknowledge Beijing as China's only representative.

Analysis

The Taiwan-U.S. Smart Partnership has played a crucial role in shaping regional geopolitical dynamics, particularly in relation to China's strategic interests. This collaboration has strengthened Taiwan's defense capabilities, acting as a deterrent against Chinese aggression through military cooperation and arms sales, thereby altering the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait. Beyond military aspects, the partnership has reinforced democratic values and institutions, posing a challenge to China's authoritarian governance and inspiring pro-democracy movements worldwide. Additionally, the U.S.'s advocacy for Taiwan's democracy has heightened pressure on China regarding human rights and political freedoms. The partnership has also contributed to China's diplomatic isolation, as the U.S. actively supports Taiwan's engagement in international forums, undermining China's One China policy and raising questions about its territorial claims.

China has responded to this partnership through a combination of soft power strategies, economic leverage, and military posturing. One of its key approaches has been the use of soft power diplomacy, which includes cultural influence, media control, and overseas investments to shape global perceptions of Taiwan and the U.S. China has sought to expand its economic and cultural presence in regions where Taiwan maintains diplomatic ties, aiming to weaken Taiwan's international recognition. Additionally, Beijing has intensified its media influence operations, promoting narratives that frame Taiwan as an inseparable part of China while discrediting U.S. involvement in the region. However, these efforts have

faced significant resistance, particularly in Taiwan, where national identity and democratic values remain strong.

Economic interdependencies between Taiwan, the U.S., and China present both strategic advantages and security risks. Taiwan's semiconductor industry, a critical component of global supply chains, has created a complex economic equilibrium that constrains Beijing's ability to exert full control. While Taiwan benefits from its technological dominance, it remains vulnerable to economic coercion, trade restrictions, and cyber threats. China has previously employed economic pressure tactics, such as restricting trade with Taiwanese businesses and leveraging its influence over global supply chains to create economic vulnerabilities. Future research could explore China's potential economic retaliation, including blockades, sanctions, and cyberattacks, which could disrupt Taiwan's technological dominance and global trade stability.

Additionally, the security implications of this partnership extend beyond Taiwan's borders, influencing broader Indo-Pacific stability. The U.S. has reinforced its military presence in the region, conducting joint exercises with Taiwan and strengthening defense cooperation with allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia. This has led to heightened tensions with China, which has responded with military drills, airspace incursions, and naval maneuvers near Taiwan. The strategic competition between the U.S. and China in the Indo-Pacific continues to evolve, with Taiwan positioned at the center of this geopolitical struggle. The Taiwan-U.S. Smart Partnership remains a critical geopolitical force, influencing security dynamics, economic dependencies, and diplomatic strategies. While China continues to employ soft power and economic leverage, Taiwan's democratic resilience and strategic alliances have countered Beijing's influence. Future research should further explore China's economic and diplomatic maneuvers, assessing their long-term implications for regional stability and global power shifts. Understanding these intricacies would provide deeper insights into the regional stability and long-term implications of this strategic partnership.

Conclusion

The strategic partnership between Taiwan and the United States has had profound implications for China, influencing regional dynamics and shaping Beijing's strategic responses. This collaboration significantly enhanced Taiwan's defence capabilities, serving as a deterrent against potential Chinese military aggression. Through arms sales and military cooperation, the United States strengthened Taiwan's security posture, thereby altering the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait. Beyond the security dimension, the partnership reinforced democratic governance across the Asia-Pacific region, challenging China's authoritarian model. Taiwan's democratic success has provided a catalyst for pro-democracy movements globally, while US advocacy for Taiwan's political system has intensified international scrutiny of China's human rights practices and governance structures. Moreover, the partnership has contributed to China's diplomatic marginalization. By facilitating Taiwan's engagement in international forums and openly contesting Beijing's "One China" policy, the United States has expanded Taiwan's global presence and undermined China's efforts to isolate Taipei on the international stage. These developments have raised fundamental questions regarding the legitimacy of China's territorial claims over Taiwan. Collectively, these factors underscore the broader geopolitical consequences of the Taiwan-US partnership, prompting strategic recalibrations in China's foreign policy, security doctrines, and diplomatic manoeuvres.

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