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**“CONTEMPLATING DIPLOMATIC FRACTURES WHILE
BREAKING THE CYCLE OF SOCIOPOLITICAL INJUSTICE
AND APATHY”**



**Strategic Assessment of Taiwan rivalry and the standpoint
of the US**

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Committee: APQ

Issue: Strategic Assessment of Taiwan rivalry and the standpoint of the US

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Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Question (APQ) committee will examine the strategic rivalry surrounding Taiwan and the role of the United States in managing cross-strait tensions. Taiwan remains one of the most sensitive geopolitical flashpoints in the international system due to competing sovereignty claims, increasing military activity, and its central role in global trade and technology. The United States' approach, balancing deterrence, diplomatic ambiguity, and alliance coordination, aims to prevent conflict while maintaining regional stability. However, rising tensions raise concerns over escalation, miscalculation, and broader implications for the Indo-Pacific security order.

Definition of Key Terms

One China Principle: The PRC's claim that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China.

One China Policy (U.S.): The U.S. position acknowledging the PRC's stance without endorsing it, while maintaining unofficial relations with Taiwan.

Status Quo: Taiwan's de facto self-governance without formal independence or PRC control.

Strategic Ambiguity: A policy of uncertainty regarding U.S. military response to deter both PRC aggression and unilateral Taiwanese independence.

Deterrence: The prevention of hostile actions through credible military, economic, or political consequences.

Gray-Zone Tactics: Coercive actions below the threshold of open warfare, such as cyber operations and military pressure.

Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs): Naval operations asserting international maritime rights.

General Overview

1) Why Taiwan is strategically central

Taiwan sits near key sea lanes in the Western Pacific, adjacent to Japan and the Philippines. Any instability can affect commercial shipping, energy flows, and regional security architectures. Taiwan is also critical to advanced semiconductor manufacturing, making the Strait a choke point for both security and the global economy.

2) Historical and political roots of the rivalry

After the Chinese civil war, the PRC governed mainland China while the ROC government continued in Taiwan. Over decades, Taiwan evolved into a consolidated democracy with its own elections, military, and institutions. Beijing maintains that reunification is inevitable and rejects moves it interprets as “separatism,” while many in Taiwan prioritize sovereignty in practice and democratic self-determination.

3) Military dynamics and escalation risks:

Cross-strait dynamics increasingly involve frequent exercises, air and maritime activity near Taiwan, missile modernization, and expanded surveillance/cyber competition. The primary escalation risks are:

- Accidents/miscalculation during close air/sea encounters.
- Crisis spirals after high-profile political visits, elections, or major exercises.
- Blockade or quarantine scenarios that test international responses without an immediate invasion.
- Cyber/disinformation campaigns undermining command systems and public trust.
- 4) The U.S. standpoint and its core objectives
- U.S. policy is typically framed around:
- Preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

- Deterring coercion or force against Taiwan.
- Maintaining credibility with allies/partners and the wider regional order.
- Avoiding unilateral changes to the status quo by either side.

Tools include arms sales and defense cooperation (within unofficial relations), regional posture adjustments, allied coordination, and diplomatic signaling.

5) Economic and technological dimensions:

Taiwan's semiconductor ecosystem is deeply embedded in global supply chains. In parallel, both the U.S. and PRC pursue technology and industrial policies that increase competition (export controls, investment screening, reshoring/"friend-shoring"). Economic interdependence can reduce incentives for open conflict, but it can also become a tool of coercion.

6) International law and recognition complexity:

Most states do not diplomatically recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state, yet many maintain substantive unofficial ties. Participation in international organizations is politically sensitive, creating continuous disputes over representation, public health coordination, aviation safety, and trade.

Major Parties Involved

People's Republic of China (PRC)

The PRC views Taiwan as an internal sovereignty issue and prioritizes preventing formal independence. Its approach combines diplomatic isolation efforts, economic pressure, military modernization, and gray-zone activities. Beijing uses legal and policy instruments (including anti-secession narratives) to justify potential use of force if it claims "separatism" crosses red lines.

Taiwan (Republic of China – ROC)

Taiwan operates as a de facto independent polity with its own democratic governance and defense forces. It seeks security guarantees, international space, and stable trade relations while managing domestic divisions over identity, cross-strait policy, and risk tolerance. Taiwan's defense approach increasingly emphasizes resilience, asymmetric capabilities, and civil preparedness.

United States of America

The U.S. seeks to deter conflict, maintain regional influence, and uphold open sea lines of communication. It balances unofficial ties with Taiwan, commitments to allies, and crisis management with Beijing. Domestic law and long-standing policy frameworks shape U.S. arms support, high-level signaling, and strategic posture.

Japan

Japan’s proximity and alliance obligations make Taiwan Strait stability a direct security concern. Disruption in the Strait can affect Japanese trade, energy routes, and defense planning. Japan often coordinates with the U.S. on regional deterrence and resilience.

Australia

Australia supports a rules-based regional order and deepens defense cooperation with partners to deter coercion. It is relevant through regional security initiatives, intelligence cooperation, and Indo-Pacific diplomacy.

The Philippines

The Philippines sits near critical maritime routes and hosts strategically significant geography in a Taiwan contingency. Its policies on basing cooperation, maritime security, and alliance coordination affect regional deterrence and crisis response.

ASEAN

ASEAN states generally prioritize de-escalation and regional stability due to trade exposure and security risks. While they vary in alignment preferences, ASEAN diplomacy is relevant to crisis messaging, economic continuity, and avoiding regional spillover.

European Union

The EU’s interests include supply chain stability, maritime security norms, and economic relations with both the U.S. and PRC. EU positioning can influence sanctions credibility, technology policy alignment, and diplomatic signaling.

Timeline of Key Events

In this section, place the important events for the topic in the table in chronological order.

1895	Qing China cedes Taiwan to Japan (Treaty of Shimonoseki).
1945	End of WWII; Taiwan placed under ROC administration.
1949	PRC established on mainland; ROC government relocates to Taiwan.

1971	UNGA Resolution 2578 recognizes China's representative at the UN.
1979	U.S. switches diplomatic recognition to PRC; U.S. passes Taiwan Relations Act
1982	August 12 Communique addresses U.S. arms sales context.
1995-1996	Taiwan Strait Crisis

Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Several diplomatic and strategic efforts have been made to manage tensions in the Taiwan Strait, though none have resulted in a final resolution. The most significant framework is the series of U.S.–China Joint Communiqués (1972, 1979, 1982), which established the basis of the U.S. “One China policy” while emphasizing peaceful resolution.

The Taiwan Relations Act (1979) represents a unilateral U.S. legal mechanism designed to preserve stability by allowing continued unofficial relations and defensive support for Taiwan. While not a conflict-resolution tool in itself, it has functioned as a deterrence framework for decades.

Cross-strait dialogue mechanisms, such as talks between semi-official organizations in the 1990s and early 2000s, temporarily reduced tensions but collapsed due to political disagreements over sovereignty and representation.

At the international level, the United Nations has largely avoided direct involvement, treating the issue as a matter of representation rather than mediation following UN General Assembly Resolution 2758. Overall, past attempts have focused on managing the conflict rather than resolving it, leaving the core dispute unresolved.

Possible Solutions

Delegates may consider a range of political, military, economic, and diplomatic approaches aimed at reducing escalation risks rather than forcing immediate resolution.

One option is the strengthening of crisis communication mechanisms, including military hotlines and incident-prevention agreements, to reduce the risk of accidental escalation.

Another approach involves confidence-building measures, such as transparency in military exercises, notification systems, or limitations on provocative actions in sensitive zones.

Delegates may also explore economic and technological resilience strategies, including diversification of supply chains and multilateral cooperation to reduce coercive leverage.

From a diplomatic perspective, encouraging multilateral dialogue platforms that include regional stakeholders could help internationalize de-escalation efforts without challenging existing recognition policies.

Finally, solutions may focus on reaffirming commitments to peaceful status-quo preservation, discouraging unilateral actions by any party while reinforcing international norms against the use of force.

Conclusion

The strategic rivalry surrounding Taiwan represents one of the most complex and high-risk challenges in contemporary international relations. Competing sovereignty claims, increasing military pressure, and great-power competition have transformed the Taiwan Strait into a potential breaking point with global consequences.

The APQ committee is tasked not with resolving the issue definitively, but with exploring realistic strategies to reduce tensions, prevent miscalculation, and maintain regional stability. Delegates are encouraged to engage in pragmatic, forward-looking debate, balancing deterrence with diplomacy and recognizing the broader implications of their proposed solutions for international peace and security.

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