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THESIS

**IS IT TIME TO CHANGE THE ONE-CHINA POLICY?:
STATUS QUO REMAINS THE LEAST DANGEROUS
OPTION**

by

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June 2020

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STATUS QUO REMAINS THE LEAST DANGEROUS OPTION**

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ABSTRACT

The strategic ambiguity inherent in the United States' One-China policy toward China and Taiwan is largely derived from three joint communiques, the Taiwan Relations Act, President Ronald Reagan's Six Assurances, and subsequent presidential statements. The geostrategic environment has changed substantially in the intervening period, with the rise of China and its aggressive behavior leading to a more adversarial U.S.-China relationship and a new era of great power competition. In this new environment, this thesis asks: Is the United States' One-China policy still the best approach to China and Taiwan? After defining the components of the United States' One-China policy, this thesis analyzes the three primary policy options: 1) abandon commitments to Taiwan; 2) double-down on the commitments to Taiwan; and 3) maintain the status quo. Through systematic analysis, this thesis draws three primary conclusions. First, the relative economic and military power dominance of the United States, coupled with the importance of credibility to regional alliances, render an abandonment of commitments to be unjustified and dangerous. Second, doubling-down on commitments is unnecessarily provocative to a core interest of China, especially considering the formidable defense already possessed by Taiwan. Finally, maintaining the status quo through a careful adherence of the One-China policy remains the best policy option for the United States.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2AD	Anti-Access/Area Denial
AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
TAIPEI	Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative
TECRO	Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION AND MAIN FINDINGS

The United States' One-China policy and strategic ambiguity toward the relations between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China is largely derived from the United States and China Joint Communiques (1972, 1978, and 1982), the Taiwan Relations Act (1979), President Reagan's Six Assurances to Taiwan, and various subsequent presidential statements. The ambiguous nature of the policy in many ways comes down to which words or passages to emphasize, differing interpretations, and through various presidential policy statements in the years since Richard Nixon embarked toward rapprochement with China. The ambiguity in the One-China policy serves to deter China from mounting an attack to overtake Taiwan, while also deterring Taiwan from taking actions to declare or move towards independence, which may provoke war. In similar fashion, the opposition to a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan has a reassuring effect to Beijing, while President Ronald Reagan's six assurances demonstrate a commitment to Taiwan.

Much has changed in the geostrategic environment since the original formulation of the One-China Policy, most prominently the rise of China in nearly every imaginable metric of comparison. United States presidential administration interpretations of the One-China policy have had a tendency to shift with each subsequent presidency, thereby presidential policy statements have often come to serve as the de facto stance of the residing presidential administration. In light of the return to great power competition, the Trump administration has sought to deepen commitments to Taiwan through the authorization of additional arms sales,¹ the passage of the Taiwan Travel Act,² the passage of the Taiwan

¹ Mohammad Zorgham, Mike Stone, and Patricia Zengerle, "U.S. State Department Approves Possible \$2.2 Billion Arms Sale to Taiwan," Reuters, July 9, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-idUSKCN1U32HT>.

² Steve Chabot, "H.R.535 - 115th Congress (2017-2018): Taiwan Travel Act," Congress.gov, March 16, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/535/text>.

Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act,³ and much higher level of diplomatic exchange between the United States and Taiwan.⁴ United States Congressional efforts are seemingly unanimously aligned in support of the Taiwan Relations Act, as noted in the recent non-binding resolution reaffirming commitments toward Taiwan and voicing support of the revamped Taiwan Assurances Act of 2019.⁵ China experts, international relations scholars, and policy experts lack consensus, and instead offer a range of policy options including an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan, doubling down on Taiwan armament efforts, maintaining the status quo, and everything in between.

The main research question of this thesis seeks to analyze whether the rise of China requires a different policy option than a maintenance of the status quo. Most specifically, given the rise of China during the recent forty years and extreme change to the strategic landscape, do the United States' One-China and strategic ambiguity policies remain the best policy approach to China and Taiwan? Or, is John Bolton correct that "it is high time to revisit the 'One-China policy' and decide what America thinks it means, 45 years after the Shanghai Communique?"⁶ If so, do the major changes in the strategic environment necessitate a fourth communique that unambiguously defines U.S. policy/intentions with regards to Taiwan?

After defining the components of the United States' One-China policy, this thesis analyzes the three primary policy options, including an abandonment of the United States' commitments to Taiwan, a doubling-down of the United States' commitments to Taiwan,

³ Cory Gardner, "S.1678 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019," Congress.gov, March 26, 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1678>.

⁴ Nick Aspinwall, "High-Level U.S. Visits to Taiwan Mark 40 Years of Unofficial Ties," *The Diplomat*, April 13, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/high-level-us-visits-to-taiwan-mark-40-years-of-unofficial-ties/>.

⁵ Patricia Zengerle, "U.S. House Passes pro-Taiwan Bills, Amid Trade Tensions with China," Reuters, May 8, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-taiwan-congress-idUSKCN1SE00T>.

⁶ John Bolton, "Revisit the 'One-China Policy,'" *Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 2017, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/revisit-the-one-china-policy-1484611627>.

and a maintenance of the status quo. Through identifying and analyzing the key implementation steps, advantages, disadvantages, and necessity of each of the primary policy options, this thesis provides an analytical framework that enables a relative comparison. Through comparison, this thesis has drawn three primary findings. First, an abandonment of the United States' commitments to Taiwan is unnecessary because the relative economic and military power parity gap remains significantly wider than often portrayed with great power competition rhetoric. Furthermore, besides betraying the people of Taiwan, an abandonment strategy would catastrophically alienate regional allies, thereby decreasing security throughout East Asia. Second, doubling-down on the United States' commitments toward Taiwan should not be adopted because Taiwan already maintains a formidable ability to defend itself against aggressive military force by China, a defensive capability that becomes intensely magnified when also considering the favorable geography of Taiwan relative to power projection from the sea. Furthermore, each of the implementation steps would be extremely provocative and maddening to China. Third, maintenance of the status quo remains the best policy option to serve the national interest of the United States, and more specifically is the policy option that is most likely to maintain the relative peace in East Asia. Despite the appearance of indecisiveness, a decision by the United States to adhere by its One-China policy and the requisite strategic ambiguity is rather a deliberate and decisive attempt to promote and maintain the relative peace that has persisted amongst the United States, China, and Taiwan. Though the status quo is far from satisfying for the United States, China, and Taiwan, the shared distribution of dissatisfaction has had, and will continue to have the greatest potential for stability across the Taiwan Strait. Put simply, any alternative is impossibly dangerous.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH QUESTION

The China of the Nixon/Kissinger era is quite different from the China that has risen in the modern day. At the time of rapprochement, China was backward and in political and social turmoil, still reeling from the failed policies of the Cultural Revolution. China ranked among the very bottom in just about every measure of effectiveness and lacked international legitimacy regarding the governance of China. Since the rapprochement, China has undergone reform leading to the largest economic expansion in world history,

and now ranks nearly on par with the United States in terms of global domestic product. The immense growth in the Chinese economy has facilitated the fielding of a military capability that is now comparable to that of the United States. Finally, China has shored up nearly all international legitimacy minus a small inconsequential few that continue to recognize Taiwan. As such, the question begs whether the changing circumstances of the modern day rise of China and return to great power competition warrants the same One-China and strategic ambiguity policies as those that defined the previous nearly half century.

As Alan Romberg states in his chronicle of the relations between the United States and China beginning in 1972, the topic of Taiwan has dominated the dialogue and resulting understandings between the United States and China.⁷ Chinese pressing of the Taiwan issue, then and now, is a result of its view that the issue of Taiwan is an internal affair, and as such, international interference would be a violation of Chinese sovereignty. This view was most recently reaffirmed by Xi Jinping in a speech on 1 January 2019, where he warned Taiwan that unification is the goal and that “we make no promise to abandon the use of force, and retain the option of taking all necessary measures.”⁸ This view has remained largely consistent within the Chinese Communist Party leadership throughout the time since rapprochement.

Chinese emphasis toward the sensitivity and importance of Taiwan has led some scholars to conclude that the misunderstandings and resulting actions regarding Taiwan could easily lead to an escalation, up to and including nuclear conflict between the United States and China.⁹ Furthermore, a simple look at the map, combined with historical conflict

⁷ Alan D. Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003).

⁸ Chris Buckley and Chris Horton, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 2019, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/01/world/asia/xi-jinping-taiwan-china.html>.

⁹ Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (April 2011): 87. See also “PBS Frontline Interview with David Lampton,” October 18, 2001, <https://pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/china/interviews/lampton.html> and Graham Allison’s *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?*, 172–175.

and ongoing regional consternation among East Asian countries, a crisis on the Taiwan Straits represents a potential flashpoint that could quickly spiral, drawing in regional powers and leading to the onset of World War III. Understanding the emphasis that China has towards the issue of Taiwan and the flashpoint that it represents, the United States' policies in this regard have direct implications toward continued world peace. As such, a thorough and thoughtful examination of the current policy towards China as it currently stands, as well as whether it should undergo change, could point toward options that decrease the possibility of war.

Taiwan serves as an excellent empirical example of a transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. Since implementing democratic reform and disestablishing martial law a little more than thirty years ago, Taiwan has proven that it can peacefully transition its presidency between the Kuomintang and the Democratic Progressive Party. Demonstration of this peaceful transition reflects the will of the people in Taiwan, while also serving as a premier democratic example within the region. Forceful unification of the wayward province by the Chinese government goes against the very grain of the democratic values that the United States stakes claim to represent. As former President Bill Clinton alluded in a March 2000 speech regarding the future status of Taiwan, "the issues between Beijing and Taiwan must be resolved peacefully and with the assent of the people of Taiwan."¹⁰

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

As briefly alluded to above, China experts, international relations scholars, and policy experts vary intensely in their interpretations of the One-China policy, as well as their recommended policy prescriptions. The first section of this literature review will attempt to characterize the One-China and strategic ambiguity policies. The second section will be a review of the five primary policy options that comprise the current scholarship.

¹⁰ Bill Clinton, "Full Text of Clinton's Speech on China Trade Bill," *New York Times*, March 9, 2000, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/030900clinton-china-text.html>.

1. Defining the One-China Policy and Strategic Ambiguity

Richard Bush states in his “A One-China Policy Primer” that “today, the U.S. One-China policy is a distillation from key documents such as the three U.S.-Chinese joint communiques and the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), and a series of policy statements made over the years, such as the ‘six assurances.’”¹¹ In *Tangled Titans*, Shelley Rigger says that “strategic ambiguity does not endorse unification or independence.”¹² She further states “the policy is ambiguous in that Washington has made no firm commitment as to whether and under what circumstances it would defend Taiwan in the event that the peaceful process breaks down. Its proponents maintain that ambiguity serves the goal of dual deterrence: it deters China from attacking Taiwan, and it deters Taipei from provoking Beijing.”¹³ Rigger also states that “the United States has never taken a position as to how the cross-strait relationship ultimately should be resolved. Instead, it holds that any outcome is acceptable, so long as the two sides arrive at it through a peaceful, mutual, and noncoercive process. Washington has made clear that Beijing should not bully Taiwan and Taiwan should not provoke or insult the PRC.”¹⁴ In other words, the ambiguity inherent in the One-China policy serves to deter China from mounting an attack to overtake Taiwan, while also deterring Taiwan from unilaterally attempting to change the status quo by way of provocative declarations, such as a formal declaration of independence.

An examination of the scholarship also presents a wide variety of disparate thought in navigating the relations among the USA, China, and Taiwan. The primary point of dispute among the existing scholarship can be very broadly framed as one of the following three: support for the status quo, calls for abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan, or calls to reinforce the deterrent provided by a credibly armed Taiwan. Upon further

¹¹ Richard C. Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2017), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-one-china-policy-primer/>.

¹² Shelley Rigger, *Tangled Titans: The United States and China*, ed. David L. Shambaugh (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 304–5.

¹³ Rigger, 305.

¹⁴ Shelley Rigger, *Why Giving up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2011), 6, <http://www.aei.org/publication/why-giving-up-taiwan-will-not-help-us-with-china/>.

review, one quickly finds that this broad framing only somewhat unpacks the complexity and purposeful ambiguousness contained within the One-China policy.

2. The Five Primary Policy Options

This section will review each of the five primary policy options. First, the United States should abandon its commitments toward Taiwan, in essence, accommodating China. Second, the United States should confront China through a doubling-down on efforts to arm Taiwan. Third, the shifting balance of power arrangements have negative implications to the United States' ability to maintain the One-China policy. Fourth, the United States shall strive to maintain the status quo. Fifth, the United States should strive to designate Taiwan's neutrality, or "Finlandization," a liberalism-based approach striving for cooperation between the United States and China. This thesis will draw upon these five primary policy options to generate the hypotheses that the rest of the thesis will examine.

a. Great Power Competition, Abandon Commitments to Taiwan (Accommodate China)

The first primary policy option seeks the accommodation of a rising China, by way of the United States backing away from its commitments toward Taiwan. In a speech given to the China Maritime Studies Institute in 2011, Chas Freeman presents his argument for abandonment of the "intellectual shackles imposed by longstanding policy and address the imperatives of long-term strategic interests."¹⁵ This recommendation calls for a reprioritization of the relationship between the United States and China, claiming that the One-China policy is incompatible with "the kind of long-term relationship of friendship and cooperation China and America want with each other." In fact, Freeman suggests that "the Taiwan issue is the only one with the potential to ignite a war between China and the United States."¹⁶ In other words, the key impediment to improving relations between the

¹⁵ Chas Freeman, "Beijing, Washington, and the Shifting Balance of Prestige: Remarks to the China Maritime Studies Institute," China Maritime Studies Institute, May 10, 2011, <https://www.mepc.org/speeches/beijing-washington-and-shifting-balance-prestige>.

¹⁶ Freeman.

United States and China is their respective policies toward Taiwan.¹⁷ To build this argument, Freeman leans on the 2008 financial crisis and continual federal deficits to describe the financial insolvency of a plan to maintain a military parity with China in the future. He further posits that the military competition between the United States and China is “all the more disadvantageous because China is competing in notably cost-effective ways, and we are not.”¹⁸ In short, Freeman’s argument could be distilled to one that recognizes the hegemonic shifting tailwinds pointing toward a rising China relative to the dwindling power and prestige of the United States. The structural pressures of the current international system are intense, and if not carefully managed, could lead to catastrophic conflict between great powers. To this, Freeman aligns with Robert Gilpin’s conflict avoidance prescription as a means of reducing commitments through retrenchment;¹⁹ or in specific terms, this policy option calls for the abandonment of U.S. commitments to Taiwan because the United States and China are entering a strategic competition and the costs to maintain the status quo are quickly approaching unsustainability for the United States.

Charles Glaser draws a similar conclusion as Freeman in that the United States should abandon its commitments to Taiwan to pave the way toward an improved and cooperative relationship with China. They differ, however, in the method for arriving at this conclusion. Whereas Freeman seeks to decrease commitments toward Taiwan as a way to place greater emphasis on the relationship between the United States and China, Glaser offers a review of the structural pressures between the United States and China. Glaser states that the realist approach need not be “pessimistic,” instead arguing that “China’s rise need not be nearly as competitive and dangerous as the standard realist argument suggests, because the structural forces driving major powers into conflict will be relatively weak.”²⁰ To back this assertion, Glaser states that “nuclear weapons make it relatively easy for major

¹⁷ Freeman.

¹⁸ Freeman.

¹⁹ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 193–94.

²⁰ Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?,” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2 (April 2011): 81.

powers to maintain highly effective deterrent forces... Large-scale conventional attacks by China against the U.S. homeland, meanwhile, are virtually impossible because the United States and China are separated by the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean.”²¹ Therefore, “the overall effect of these conditions is to greatly moderate the security dilemma. Both the United States and China will be able to maintain high levels of security now and through any potential rise of China to superpower status.”²² In short, Glaser argues that nuclear deterrence and the impossibility of conventional attacks, which is applicable to both the United States and China, significantly diminishes the security dilemma. Much like the other realist scholars, Glaser pays heed to the ease of nuclear escalation in the event of a crisis over Taiwan; furthermore, Glaser asserts that continued armament of Taiwan could lead to a spiraling nuclear and conventional arms race between the United States and Taiwan.²³ Hence, given the combination of the low security dilemma with the catastrophic risks, the United States ought to recede from commitments to Taiwan. Glaser concludes that “this [withdraw from commitments toward Taiwan] would remove the most obvious and contentious flash point between the United States and China and smooth the way for better relations between them in the decades to come.”²⁴

Given the intense structural pressures created by the rise of China, Graham Allison asserts that the United States and China must both more carefully manage their relations to avoid succumbing to the Thucydides Trap. In his prelude article for *The Atlantic* in September 2015, Allison concludes that:

what strategists need most at the moment is not a new strategy, but a long pause for reflection. If the tectonic shift caused by China’s rise poses a challenge of genuinely Thucydidean proportions, declarations about ‘rebalancing,’ or revitalizing ‘engage and hedge,’ or presidential hopefuls’

²¹ Glaser, 83.

²² Glaser, 83.

²³ Glaser, 87.

²⁴ Glaser, 87.

calls for more ‘muscular’ or ‘robust’ variants of the same, amount to little more than aspirin treating cancer.²⁵

Allison’s thesis rebuts the policies of the past (engage and hedge), policies of the present at time of writing (rebalancing), and 2016 presidential election rhetoric toward China (muscular/robust) as inept. Instead, Allison states that China’s epic rise is a pragmatic condition, not a problem needing solved. “Managing this relationship without war will demand sustained attention, week by week, at the highest level in both countries.”²⁶ In his subsequently published book *Destined for War*, Allison offers a much greater amount of detail, first outlying his argument of a so-called “Thucydides Trap,” followed by his assertion that the competition between China and the United States fits this profile. As he mentions throughout the book and article, 12 of the 16 cases of hegemonic struggle studied in the previous half millennium have led to war; only those that were carefully managed throughout the shifting cycle were able to avoid catastrophic consequences to all parties involved. To manage the struggle between the United States and China, Allison recommends a “review [of] all the strategic options—even the ugly ones.”²⁷ The strategies outlined in this section of Allison’s book are led first by one of accommodation, where he offers that a curtailment of commitments toward Taiwan could permit Chinese concessions elsewhere within the shifting international system deemed of higher strategic interest to the United States.²⁸

Former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral (ret.) Bill Owens made a similar plea to Freeman and Glaser in November 2009, opting for pursuit of cooperation between the United States and China. With regards to the Taiwan Relations Act, Owens states that “it is the basis on which we continue to sell arms to Taiwan, an act that is not in

²⁵ Graham T. Allison, “The Thucydides Trap: Are the U.S. and China Headed for War?,” *The Atlantic*, September 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/united-states-china-war-thucydides-trap/406756/>.

²⁶ Allison.

²⁷ Graham T. Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 220.

²⁸ Allison, 221.

our best interest.”²⁹ After acknowledging a rising China, Owens rebukes the pessimistic realism approaches, concluding that “the solution is to approach the US/China relationship not with hedging, competition, or watchfulness, but with cooperation, openness and trust.”³⁰ Owens does not quite go as far as to recommend completely abandoning commitments toward Taiwan, but this is implied in his closing remarks, “the US-China relationship is a vital interest for the two countries and the world.”³¹

At the time of Freeman’s speech, the United States was in the early stages of what now would be constituted as a historic bull market. Despite the continuation of annual federal deficits adding to the federal debt, the primary suggestions of sustainability offered by Freeman does not seem to be totally viable, at least not yet. As evident by increased military spending, especially during the Trump presidency, the United States continues to significantly outspend China. This said, despite the “dismal” growth rate of 6.2% for the quarter ended June 2019, which dwarfs the growth rates in the United States, would serve as the basis for proof to Freeman’s claim that unsustainability will eventually come to fruition; this point of relative growth rates was also highlighted by Allison in both his article in *The Atlantic* and throughout his book.

b. Great Power Competition, Double-down on Efforts to Arm Taiwan (Confront China)

The second primary policy option calls for confronting China through a doubling-down of efforts to arm Taiwan. In the article “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser agree with the assessments by Freeman and Allison of China’s rise, however, starkly conclude that strength must be projected as a way of maintaining the status quo. In answering the question posed by the title of the article, the authors conclude “that the United States should neither abandon nor reduce its

²⁹ Bill Owens, “America Must Start Treating China as a Friend,” *FT.Com*, November 17, 2009, <https://www.ft.com/content/69241506-d3b2-11de-8caf-00144feabdc0>.

³⁰ Owens.

³¹ Owens.

commitments to Taiwan, but strengthen them.”³² In building this argument, the authors critique the benefits of the retrenchment strategy; contrary to the conclusions drawn by Freeman and Allison, Tucker and Glaser assert that “a U.S. sacrifice of Taiwan, while gratifying, could not thoroughly slake a continuing need for Beijing to demonstrate its power. Indeed, the sacrifice might promote new appetites and necessitate fresh efforts to satisfy that need.”³³ They further counter that an abandonment of Taiwan would not necessarily permit other grand bargains to resolve the conflicting interests between the United States and China, namely the divide of the Korean Peninsula,³⁴ something that Allison briefly begs the question in *Destined for War*.³⁵ Tucker and Glaser conclude that “China would respond to appeasement as have virtually all governments: it would conclude that a weaker United States lacking vision and ambition could be pressured and manipulated.”³⁶ They further assert that a compromise solution of halting arms sales to Taiwan while otherwise maintaining support, would gradually erode Taiwan’s ability to deter an invasion by China. In addition to their staunch defense of the deterrent measures provided by a more defensively capable Taiwan, the authors also focus on the importance of continued support to Taiwan for the sake of democracy. As a democratic state, the people of Taiwan must have a resolute say in the future status of Taiwan.

Former National Security Advisor John Bolton also subscribes to this policy option. In light of President Trump’s acceptance of the congratulatory phone call by Tsai Ing-wen, Bolton penned an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal*, concluding that “America could enhance its East Asia military posture by increasing U.S. military sales to Taiwan and by again stationing military personnel and assets there, probably negotiating favorable

³² Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (October 2011): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2011.609128>.

³³ Tucker and Glaser, 25.

³⁴ Tucker and Glaser, 25.

³⁵ Allison, *Destined for War*, 221.

³⁶ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 33.

terms.”³⁷ Bolton asserts “it is high time to revisit the ‘One-China policy’ and decide what America thinks it means... Let’s see how an increasingly belligerent China responds.”³⁸ Throughout the disparaging op-ed, Bolton draws on the fundamentally different contemporary circumstances to those that were evident during Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter’s pursuit of détente. In his argument calling for the United States to increasingly fortify the defense posture of Taiwan, Bolton does so from a base of utilizing Taiwan as an instrument to control the great power competition between the United States and China. In other words, the focus is on Taiwan in order to deter conflict with China, much less about Taiwan for the sake of democracy.

c. Great Power Competition, The Shifting Balance of Power Requires a Revamped One-China Policy

The third primary policy option calls for a recognition of the shifting balance of power and resultant great power competition, and how this will have a negative effect to the United States’ ability to maintain the One-China policy. Robert Sutter penned an article in 2009, about a year after Ma Ying-jeou assumed the presidency of Taiwan, bringing the return of the Kuomintang party to the forefront of politics in Taiwan, and with it a different set of challenges for the United States, compared to the previous eight years of leadership under the Democratic Progressive Party.³⁹ As Sutter notes, United States’ policy at the time welcomed the easing of cross strait tensions that had been subject to consternation during the rule of Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party. Sutter argues that the easing of tensions and resumption of an approach of “moderation and accommodation”⁴⁰ by Taiwan toward China is actually in contrast to the “longstanding U.S. policy goal of maintaining a balance of power and influence in the Taiwan area

³⁷ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

³⁸ Bolton.

³⁹ Robert Sutter, “Cross-Strait Moderation and the United States – Policy Adjustments Needed,” *PacNet*, no. 17 (March 5, 2009): 1–2.

⁴⁰ Sutter, 1.

favorable to Taiwan and U.S. interests and influenced by the United States.”⁴¹ In other words, Sutter sees the improved diplomacy brought about by return of the less contentious Kuomintang party, actually going against the interests of the United States, despite the easement of tensions and decreased likelihood for spikes of crisis in the Taiwan Straits. In order to maintain the balance, Sutter argues that Taiwan must be defiant against, not compliant with China in efforts toward political absorption. This argument rang true in the most recent Taiwan presidential cycle albeit flipped, as Han Kuo-yu sought election under the Kuomintang banner, at times offering that Taiwan’s economy will likely become more prosperous with improved and closer ties to Beijing (this viewpoint has shifted significantly in light of the protests in Hong Kong).⁴²

d. Great Power Cooperation Might be Possible, but Great Power Competition is Pragmatic; Attempts to Change the Status Quo too Dangerous

The fourth primary policy option suggests the continuation and maintenance of the ambiguity offered by the One-China policy, something that has proven effective in securing the true interests of the United States. Whereas Robert Sutter has argued that the United States must pay heed to the shifting balance of power, Richard Bush and Alan Romberg rebut in the same forum (PacNet), instead placing the emphasis on peace and stability.⁴³ As noted above, this debate occurred shortly after the resumption of leadership of the Kuomintang Party after eight years of tense relations between the United States and the Democratic Progressive Party. Bush and Romberg believe that Sutter’s conclusion is based on a faulty “assumption that the U.S. would not be willing to take an effective stand against PRC coercion or worse against Taiwan.”⁴⁴ Though they offer that no evidence suggests

⁴¹ Sutter, 1.

⁴² Chris Horton, “Populist Mayor Is Picked to Run Against Taiwan’s President,” *The New York Times*, July 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/15/world/asia/taiwan-han-kuo-yu-president-china.html>.

⁴³ Richard Bush and Alan D. Romberg, “‘Cross-Strait Moderation and the United States’ – A Response to Robert Sutter,” *PacNet*, no. 17A (March 12, 2009): 1–2.

⁴⁴ Bush and Romberg, 1.

this assumption might be true, the very fact that this could be debated as an assumption speaks to the ambiguity, which is in turn what Bush and Romberg argue has been a pillar for maintaining the peace between the United States and China. Furthermore, the authors advocate a status quo approach because they believe that attempts to change are at least as equally dangerous. Of the same thought, Shelley Rigger asserts “such a change would indeed delight Beijing, but it would create new problems just as intractable as the old ones but less familiar and potentially even more challenging.”⁴⁵

In Bush’s “A One-China Policy Primer,” he provides an extensive review of the history of relations that have come to define the United States’ One-China policy and the contradicting Chinese viewed (and imposed upon the international community), One-China Principle. Bush believes that so long as Taiwan does not violate the terms in China’s Anti-Secession Law, then Beijing would prefer to unify through political measures and negotiation.⁴⁶ Bush continues by stating that:

one factor strengthening that preference is the adherence of the United States to the One-China policy, plus the possibility that the United States would intervene to defend Taiwan in case of an attack. So even though this linkage is not a binding commitment and should be constantly reevaluated, a probabilistic statement is possible: Beijing is more likely to stick to its peaceful policy as long as Washington adheres to its One-China policy.⁴⁷

In other words, despite the rise of China, arguable decline of the United States, and other aspects of the arguments presented in the above alternate primary policy options, Bush believes that Bolton is wrong in claiming that “it is high time to revisit the ‘One-China policy.’”⁴⁸ In describing previous policy approaches that Bush coins “dual deterrence,” Bush states that:

Washington had both warnings and reassurances for both sides of the Taiwan Strait. To Beijing, the U.S. warned against the use of force but

⁴⁵ Rigger, *Why Giving up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China*, 4–5.

⁴⁶ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 20.

⁴⁷ Bush, 20.

⁴⁸ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

stressed that we did not support Taiwan independence. To Taipei, the U.S. warned against political steps that objectively might provoke a coercive response from the PRC, but offered assurance that the United States would not sacrifice Taiwan's interests for the sake of good relations with Beijing.⁴⁹

Though Bush does not directly state as such, his "dual deterrence" perfectly defines a policy of "strategic ambiguity."

e. Great Power Cooperation, Abandon Commitments toward Taiwan, Liberalism Approach

Bruce Gilley offers a liberalism-based approach toward achieving a high level of cooperation between the United States and China, drawing similar conclusions as Freeman and Allison that the United States should abandon its commitments toward Taiwan. At the same time though, Gilley's rationale and methods are quite contrasting from the realist approaches discussed above. Gilley argues that Taiwan would best serve its own interests by adopting an approach that Gilley coins "Finlandization." Gilley explains Finlandization as a scenario under which:

Taiwan would reposition itself as a neutral power, rather than a U.S. strategic ally, in order to mollify Beijing's fears about the island's becoming an obstacle to China's military and commercial ambitions in the region. In return, Beijing would back down on its military threats, grant Taipei expanded participation in international organizations, and extend the island favorable economic and social benefits.⁵⁰

Anticipating realist critiques, Gilley further explains "Taiwan has played a strategic role in U.S. foreign policy since the 1940s... The tragic results of this policy, however, has been that it has played into Beijing's fears of encirclement and naval inferiority, which in turn has prompted China's own military buildup."⁵¹ Gilley argues that the One-China and strategic ambiguity policies serve to prevent the achievement of Taiwan neutrality through

⁴⁹ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 22.

⁵⁰ Bruce Gilley, "Not So Dire Straits," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 1 (February 2010): 50, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2010-01-01/not-so-dire-straits>.

⁵¹ Gilley, 56.

stating that “in the past, U.S. ‘noninterference’ meant maintaining the balance of power across the strait and challenging Beijing’s provocations. Today, it means reducing the militarization of the conflict and not interfering with Taiwan’s Finlandization.”⁵² Furthermore, Gilley points out that “in 1982, the United States pledged to China that it would reduce its arms sales to Taiwan—a promise that it has conspicuously broken ever since.”⁵³ According to Gilley, these realist approaches of preserving the balance of power and credibly arming Taiwan for the sake of deterrence embolden Taiwan in a way that garners anxiety to the Chinese, both of which ultimately prevent the cooperation necessary that would lead to mutual gain for the United States, China, and Taiwan.

D. HYPOTHESES AND POLICY OPTIONS

Upon review of the competing literature, follow-on research will be focused toward analyzing the policy options represented by accommodation, confrontation, and status quo. Accordingly, these policy options will be analyzed to determine if the One-China policy remains the best policy approach toward China and Taiwan.

1. Accommodate China

The arguments suggesting that the United States shall abandon its commitments toward Taiwan is correct given the rise of China, especially when viewed in relative terms to the arguable decline of the United States. Robert Gilpin’s insights gained from the study of hegemonic war theory tell us that this rise will lead to a disequilibrium in the international system. Furthermore, and in large part because of this disequilibrium, the continued defensive commitments toward Taiwan no longer serve the national interest of the United States; though the United States may prefer that Taiwan remain a prosperous democracy, Washington should instead prioritize its relationship with Beijing, especially relative to the competing rise of China. As a matter of returning to equilibrium, the United States must seek to reduce commitments. In this particular case, a reduction of commitments is best served through retrenchment, more specifically in form of

⁵² Gilley, 58.

⁵³ Gilley, 59.

accommodation. By reducing and/or abandoning commitments toward Taiwan, the United States will reduce the structural frictions and pressures of the rise of China, thereby bringing the current international system to equilibrium and avoiding catastrophic conflict with China. The relative rise of China across nearly every measure of diplomatic, information, military, and economic effectiveness, deem the maintenance of the status quo an invalid policy option. The ambiguity of the One-China policy, and the defensive commitments toward Taiwan in the Taiwan Relations Act must be revamped to accommodate the rise of China.

2. Confront China

Pursuit of the Chinese Dream through a rising China has been anything but peaceful. Chinese rhetoric of its century of humiliation provides the basis for its stake toward rejuvenation as it strives to achieve the Chinese Dream by 2049. Chinese historical aggressive nature toward Taiwan, to include a contemporary refusal to rule out using military force to reunify Taiwan with the mainland, foreshadow its intentions toward the rest of the region. Much like Hitler's thirst was not quenched through appeasement, Chinese stated ambitions toward reunifying the wayward Taiwan Province will not be suppressed; attempts to do so will only serve to further embolden China. Taiwan is a regional stalwart, perfectly demonstrating the effectiveness of democratic and capitalistic institutions. The United States had maintained a uniquely friendly relationship with Taiwan to balance against the rise of communism; though an opportunity for rapprochement existed in 1972, the timing of the Taiwan Relations Act was anything but coincidental. The Taiwan Relations Act and President Reagan's "Six Assurances" have permitted the United States to provide Taiwan with a military deterrent, and given the modern day rise of Chinese military capabilities, a doubling down of defensive commitments toward Taiwan is in order. Concurrently, Beijing needs to be made keenly aware of United States intentions toward the protection of the democratic people of Taiwan; the permitted ambiguity of the One-China policy clouds the matter. The ascendancy of John Bolton to

the National Security Advisor to President Trump had been fitting given his rhetorically confrontational claim that “it is high time to revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”⁵⁴

3. Maintenance of the Status Quo through Minor Adjustments

The effectiveness of the One-China policy in maintaining regional peace is inarguable. The ambiguities are inherent to the policy, as is the choice to purposefully not have a formal declaration of precisely the commitments that might be entailed within the policy. The ambiguities created through providing both “warnings and reassurances”⁵⁵ to each China and Taiwan has and will continue to foster diplomacy, concurrently allowing for the exponential economic expansion for Taiwan, China, and the United States. Attempts to change course now, especially given the change of the strategic environment are inherently dangerous, and even if initially effective or encouraging, have a high likelihood of presenting a new set of unfamiliar and unknowable challenges. The One-China policy has not been perfect, nor was this ever the intention. But, the ambiguities within the policy has kept Chinese aggression at bay, thereby affording a status quo that serves the needs of China, Taiwan, and the United States. As such, President Trump will be best served surrounded by experts that convey both the pragmatic and beneficial nature of the One-China policy.

The policy options represented by Robert Sutter and “Finlandization,” will be omitted from follow-on research. Though the views presented by Robert Sutter may again become prevalent under a Kuomintang presidential administration, these views have become a bit muted since the return to power of the Democratic Progressive Party in 2016. “Finlandization” has its merits, however, the growing schisms between the United States and China, and more so, the democratic desires of the people of Taiwan make this option less relevant for further study.

⁵⁴ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

⁵⁵ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 22.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

In analyzing which of the hypotheses presents the most persuasive argument, an analytical framework will be developed to determine the contemporary viability of each of the proposed policy options. Each of the policy options will be reviewed to define their characterization of the One-China policy and whether the characterization accurately reflects the realities presented by the return to great power competition. This analysis of the characterization will point to the perceived successes and failures which have led to the assessed necessity for change, and increase my understanding of the advantages, disadvantages, and risks associated with each policy option. Finally, each of the policy options will be explored to determine how they would look in the context of the future great power relations between the United States and China.

To explore the “Accommodate China” policy option, I intend to study hegemonic war theory, beginning with a thorough review of the key tenets offered by Robert Gilpin in *War and Change in World Politics*, followed by subsequent hegemonic realism and hegemonic war theory scholarship. Based on this review, I will then seek sources that discuss the tenets of this theory to the current context surrounding the international relations between the United States and China, and particularly those that include an accommodation or otherwise drawback of commitments toward Taiwan.

To explore the “Confront China” policy option, I intend to study offensive realism, beginning with a thorough review of journal articles that outlay the key tenets of offensive realism, particularly those authored by John Mearsheimer, followed by carefully reading Mearsheimer’s *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. I will then seek sources that apply the contemporary geostrategic context to the tenets of offensive realism.

To test the “Status Quo” policy option, I will seek to become inundated with the surrounding history of the relations among the United States, China, and Taiwan. I may briefly look at the period prior to 1972, but the focus will begin with Henry Kissinger’s initial secret meeting in Beijing in 1971. Research will include Alan Romberg’s *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice*, Richard Bush’s *Uncharted Strait*, Shelley Rigger’s *Why Taiwan*

Matters, and Kissinger's *On China*. The peace of the previous near half-century will serve as the applicable case study in determining the continued viability of the One-China policy.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis will be organized into approximately six chapters. Chapter I consists of the relevant information contained within this proposal, primarily the research question, significance, literature review, and potential policy options. Chapter II describes the One-China and strategic ambiguity policies. Chapter III tests the "Accommodate China" policy option. Chapter IV tests the "Confront China" policy option. Chapter V tests the "Status Quo" policy option, to include a thorough assessment of the viability of the United States being able to uphold the commitments as contained in the One-China policy, especially in consideration of the contemporary rise of China. Chapter VI offers concluding assessments and thoughts.

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II. DEFINING THE ONE-CHINA POLICY

A. INTRODUCTION

Shortly after securing the 2016 presidential nomination, Donald Trump accepted the phone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.⁵⁶ Though the call was intended to offer congratulatory remarks, the interaction caused a much larger upstir among global China experts.⁵⁷ Questions began to be asked as to whether this unprecedented phone call between the incoming president and his counterpart in Taiwan had in some way violated the United States' One-China policy. Nine days later, Trump told Fox News Sunday that "I fully understand the One-China policy, but I don't know why we have to be bound by a One-China policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade."⁵⁸ The question begged then, as it does now, did President Trump or his administration really understand the nuances and complexities of the United States' One-China policy? Perhaps in a more general sense, what is the United States' One-China policy and how did it come into being? What are some of the key commitments inherent to the One-China policy? The purpose of this chapter serves to describe the One-China policy and its purposefully inherent ambiguities, so as to set the stage for an evaluation of the primary critiques of the policy.

In truth, the United States' One-China policy is not as compact or concisely defined as may be suggested with an utterance that the United States has a One-China policy. Rather, the One-China policy is a messy and complex amalgamation of three joint communiques (Shanghai Communique, Normalization Communique, and the 17 August

⁵⁶ Josh Chin and Charles Hutzler, "Trump's Phone Call with Taiwan President Sparks China Complaint," *Wall Street Journal*, December 3, 2016, sec. World, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/trumps-phone-call-with-taiwan-president-sparks-china-complaint-1480762723>.

⁵⁷ Richard C. Bush, "An Open Letter to Donald Trump on the One-China Policy," December 13, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/12/13/an-open-letter-to-donald-trump-on-the-one-china-policy/>.

⁵⁸ Caren Bohan and David Brunstromm, "Trump Says U.S. Not Necessarily Bound by 'One China' Policy," Reuters, December 12, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-china-idUSKBN1400TY>.

1982 Communique), the Taiwan Relations Act, President Reagan's Six Assurances to Taiwan, and various subsequent presidential statements.⁵⁹ As will be seen through description below, many aspects and language within these key documents or statements were purposefully ambiguous, leaving open the possibility of differing interpretations. This is not to suggest that the United States or China had necessarily been acting in bad faith throughout their relations, but rather, the carefully selected language would allow the primary dispute to be shelved.⁶⁰ By skirting direct and unambiguous statements regarding the future of Taiwan, both the United States and China may have been able to gain consensus on other issues, but the diplomatic wordsmithing is rigged with danger. The contemporary impact of non-consensus on the issue of Taiwan, more than any other dispute, has the potential for catastrophic conflict between nuclear capable superpowers.⁶¹ With the return of great power competition, scholars and diplomats alike have increasingly begun to question the tenets of the One-China policy by offering instead their own policy prescription to ensure the globally leading role of the United States. The nuances of the differing policy prescriptions can only be understood by first gaining comprehension of the components of the One-China policy.

B. SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE (27 FEBRUARY 1972)

The origins of the One-China policy date primarily to President Nixon's decision to seek a rapprochement with China.⁶² At the time, Nixon believed that friendlier relations with China could lead to an honorable end of the Vietnam War and a balance against the Cold War threat posed by the Soviet Union.⁶³ With this in mind, Nixon secretly sent his

⁵⁹ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 2.

⁶⁰ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 19–150.

⁶¹ David M. Lampton, *Following the Leader: Ruling China, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 165–68.

⁶² James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 13–52.

⁶³ Mann, 39–44.

National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to Beijing in July 1971 to meet with the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai.⁶⁴ This secret meeting was intended to lay the groundwork that would ultimately lead to Nixon's historic visit to China in February 1972. At the conclusion of Nixon's trip to China, the United States and China issued a joint communique describing the proceedings of the various meetings.⁶⁵

Though much of language contained in the joint communique had been determined beforehand, the issue of Taiwan was predominant and remained a contentious point preventing agreement.⁶⁶ To China, the future of Taiwan served as a lynchpin for all other matters relating to détente. To the United States, the future of Taiwan needs to be resolved mutually and peacefully. The two sides reached agreement towards the end of Nixon's trip in Shanghai, hence the common reference of this communique as the Shanghai Communique.⁶⁷ The Shanghai Communique served as the culmination of intense diplomacy, paving the way toward rapprochement, or so it was thought.

A key statement in the Shanghai Communique is that "the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves."⁶⁸ Though seemingly only slightly nuanced, an acknowledgement of the Chinese position is very different than a statement of the actual position of the United States. Similarly, not challenging the Chinese position, does not definitively equate to

⁶⁴ Mann, 26–36.

⁶⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1975, Volume XVII, China 1969–1972, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred as the 'Shanghai Communique,'" February 27, 1972, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>.

⁶⁶ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 29–42.

⁶⁷ Romberg, 42–48.

⁶⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1975, Volume XVII, China 1969–1972, "Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred as the 'Shanghai Communique.'"

alignment with the Chinese position. From the perspective of the United States, these words were very carefully crafted so as to purposefully contain a necessary amount of ambiguity that would allow for future freedom of action.⁶⁹ Even still, the language was palatable to the Chinese position.

C. NORMALIZATION COMMUNIQUE (15 DECEMBER 1978)

Though Nixon had intended to take the next step toward normalization after securing reelection later in 1972, Watergate and related domestic politics proved insurmountable barriers to progress for both Nixon (before he resigned) and President Ford.⁷⁰ Nearly seven years after Nixon's initial trip to China, President Jimmy Carter and Deng Xiaoping affirmed a second agreement, commonly referred as the Normalization Communique.⁷¹

Along with reaffirming the principles contained within the Shanghai Communique, the Normalization Communique formally established diplomatic relations between the United States and China. Additionally, the Normalization Communique states that "the United States of America recognizes the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China."⁷² Though this sentiment was absolutely necessary to normalize relations, it also represented a forced choice placed upon the United States.⁷³ In keeping with Westphalian principles (and the United States' "acknowledgement of the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is a part of China"⁷⁴), the

⁶⁹ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 47.

⁷⁰ Romberg, 42–75.

⁷¹ "Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred to as the 'Normalization Communique,'" December 15, 1978, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1977-80v01/d104>.

⁷² "Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred to as the 'Normalization Communique.'"

⁷³ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 8–13.

⁷⁴ "Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred to as the 'Normalization Communique.'"

recognition of the PRC came at direct cost to continued recognition of the Republic of China (Taiwan).⁷⁵ The United States' uneasiness with this derecognition of Taiwan is apparent in the very next sentence: "Within this context, the people of the United States will maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan."⁷⁶

In normalizing relations with China, the United States announced the intent to dissolve the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of China within one year and committed to the withdrawal of residual United States military personnel from Taiwan.⁷⁷ Not explicitly stated in the text of the communique but very much a part of the preceding dialogue, arms sales to Taiwan would continue beyond the expiration of the mutual defense treaty.⁷⁸ "Other unofficial relations" with Taiwan was purposefully ambiguous and vague, later permitting the establishment of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT).⁷⁹ At the time, the mission of AIT was not completely clear; however, it now serves as an unofficial, but de facto embassy, carrying out actions of American interests much similar to any other United States embassy.

D. TAIWAN RELATIONS ACT (10 APRIL 1979)

Up to the point of the Normalization Communique and in accordance with presidential mandate, the handlings of this particular aspect of foreign policy resided solely within the executive department.⁸⁰ However, the necessary language of the communiques to quell China, did not speak directly to the will of the people of the United States in terms

⁷⁵ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 8–9.

⁷⁶ "Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred to as the 'Normalization Communique.'"

⁷⁷ "Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. Commonly Referred to as the 'Normalization Communique.'"

⁷⁸ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 94–96.

⁷⁹ Romberg, 76–117.

⁸⁰ Romberg, 106–7.

of the defense of Taiwan. Accordingly, and shortly after the Normalization Communique, congressional leaders completely overhauled a bill submitted by the Carter Administration to address the cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations noted above.⁸¹

Largely as a result of unilateral action taken by the executive department (as opposed to consulting with congress), and the perception that the Carter Administration had dismissed Taiwan entirely, the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) was passed in the House and Senate with resounding bipartisan approval.⁸² Interestingly, the TRA attempts to explicitly state many of the purposefully ambiguous points of the Shanghai and Normalization Communiques:

The United States decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means and that any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes is considered a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States. The United States shall provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character and shall maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan.⁸³

In essence, the TRA imposes congressional curbs to compel consultation and inhibit unilateral action by the president with regards to Taiwan, even though the TRA effectively summarized the unstated positions of United States policy toward China.⁸⁴ As a result and most probably expected, the TRA drew intense ire from Chinese leaders, feelings that would not easily subside, especially during the campaigning and ascendancy of Ronald Reagan to the presidency.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Romberg, 107.

⁸² Clement J. Zablocki, "Actions - H.R.2479 - 96th Congress (1979-1980): Taiwan Relations Act," Congress.gov, April 10, 1979, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479/actions>.

⁸³ Zablocki.

⁸⁴ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 108.

⁸⁵ Romberg, 106-17.

E. THIRD JOINT COMMUNIQUE (17 AUGUST 1982)

As a prelude to his presidential stances toward China, Ronald Reagan's campaign rhetoric reflected his support of the people of Taiwan through emphasis of the officiality of the TRA.⁸⁶ At the angst of Chinese leadership and the Carter Administration alike, Reagan's public statements foreshadowed his emboldened desires to maintain continued arms sales to Taiwan and make the AIT as robust as the TRA would possibly allow.⁸⁷ This sentiment was carried forward into Reagan's presidency and is somewhat (if ambiguously) reflected in the Third Joint Communique that readdresses the issue of United States arms sales to Taiwan.⁸⁸

In the communique, the United States conveyed a committal to gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan, but this statement was contingent (even if unstated explicitly) on China continuing to strive for peaceful resolve of the issue of Taiwan.⁸⁹ In other words, the implication from the perspective of the United States was that arms sales would halt only if China renounced a pledge to militarily resolve the issue of Taiwan. If Chinese military expenditures reflected offensive capabilities that might be useful to initiate an attack on Taiwan, the United States could interpret these actions as a defiance of the strive for a peaceful resolution. The Chinese perspective that these same offensive capabilities could serve in a defensive capacity has long been overlooked, no matter the actual (though unknowable) Chinese intentions.

In fact, the uneasiness that lingered within the Reagan administration had more or less already invoked this interpretation.⁹⁰ This is evident by three separate messages of

⁸⁶ Romberg, 111–17.

⁸⁷ Romberg, 111–17.

⁸⁸ U.S. Department of State, "Joint Communique Issued by the Governments of the United States and the People's Republic of China on August 17, 1982. Commonly Referred to as the 'Third Communique' or the 'Arms Control Communique'" (U.S. Department of State, August 17, 1982), 1038–39, <http://archive.org/details/americanforeignp00unit>.

⁸⁹ U.S. Department of State, 1038–39.

⁹⁰ Ronald Reagan, "Statement on United States Arms Sales to Taiwan" (Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, August 17, 1982), <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/81782b>.

reassurance delivered to ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo by AIT Director James Lilley, more formally referred to as Reagan's Six Assurances to Taiwan (discussed further below).⁹¹ Additionally, shortly after the issuance of the Third Joint Communique, Reagan wrote a secret codicil to clarify and explain his own interpretation, originally described by James Mann in *About Face*.⁹² In the secret memorandum, Reagan wrote:

The U.S. willingness to reduce its arms sales to Taiwan is conditioned absolutely upon the continued commitment of China to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan-PRC differences. It should be clearly understood that the linkage between these two matters is a permanent imperative of U.S. foreign policy. In addition, it is essential that the quantity and quality of the arms provided Taiwan be conditioned entirely on the threat posed by the PRC. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms, Taiwan's defense capability relative to that of the PRC will be maintained.⁹³

Though the Third Joint Communique was jointly agreed, Reagan and subsequent presidential administration have placed nearly zero emphasis to the contents, instead largely adopting a stance consistent with the codicil and the Six Assurances.

F. REAGAN'S SIX ASSURANCES TO TAIWAN

Concurrent with the issuance of the Third Joint Communique, the Reagan Administration authorized ROC authorities to publicly convey the Taipei understanding of the intentions of the United States.⁹⁴ This understanding was captured in six bullets drafted by the AIT and endorsed by the Reagan Administration, though emphasis was given to Taiwan Vice Foreign Minister Fredrick Chien that Taiwan was to adopt these bullets as its

⁹¹ Harvey Feldman, *President Reagan's Six Assurances to Taiwan and Their Meaning Today* (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 2007), <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/president-reagans-six-assurances-taiwan-and-their-meaning-today>.

⁹² Mann, *About Face*, 127–28.

⁹³ Shirley A Kan, *China/Taiwan: Evolution of the "One China" Policy—Key Statements from Washington, Beijing, and Taipei* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), 46.

⁹⁴ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 134–35.

own understandings of the United States' commitments to Taiwan.⁹⁵ These six bullet points are now more formally referred as the Six Assurances to Taiwan and were designed to more clearly state the United States position toward Taiwan, despite the language and context of the Third Joint Communiqué.⁹⁶

Though originally drafted to ease any sense of abandonment in Taipei, they largely sum up the contemporary stance of the United States toward Taiwan, and thus are worth listing verbatim as they were orally conveyed to ROC authorities.

The United States:

1. Had not agreed to set a date for ending arms sales to the Republic of China.
2. Had not agreed to hold prior consultations with the PRC regarding arms sales to the Republic of China.
3. Would not play a mediation role between the PRC and the Republic of China.
4. Would not revise the Taiwan Relations Act.
5. Had not altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan.
6. Would not exert pressure on the Republic of China to enter into negotiations with the PRC.⁹⁷

These Six Assurances are a more accurate representation of the sentiment contained within Reagan's codicil with regards to the conditionality that arms sales to Taiwan would have with the threat posed by the PRC. Much like the continually increasing threat posed by China toward Taiwan (or at least perceived or interpreted as such), arms sales to Taiwan have continued throughout all subsequent United States presidential administrations. This fact seems to run contrary to the provisions of the Third Joint Communiqué, but only when viewed in the literal meaning of the purposefully ambiguous language.

⁹⁵ Romberg, 134–35.

⁹⁶ Kan, *China/Taiwan: Evolution of the "One China" Policy—Key Statements from Washington, Beijing, and Taipei*, 43–44.

⁹⁷ Feldman, *President Reagan's Six Assurances to Taiwan and Their Meaning Today*, 2.

G. SUBSEQUENT PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENTS

Former President George H. W. Bush stirred waves in the relations between the United States and China in 1992 with the abrupt approval of F-16 advanced fighter aircraft to Taiwan. Though this decision had a clear appearance of favoring the provisions within the TRA, Romberg asserts that this was more of a domestic political act than a clear shift away from the status quo.⁹⁸ President Bush was amidst a close reelection campaign and direly needed the support of the state of Texas to have any chance of defeating the rival Bill Clinton; to the benefit of Taiwan, General Dynamics' production line for the F-16 advanced fighter aircraft was located in Texas.⁹⁹ Additionally, throughout his administration, President Bush had been viewed as not being tough enough towards China, particularly through the decision not to publicly rebuke China over its handling of the events at Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989.¹⁰⁰ Both of these factors likely influenced President Bush to announce his approval of the F-16 advanced fighter aircraft sale to Taiwan while visiting the same General Dynamics production plant where these aircraft would be built.¹⁰¹

Though China disapproved of the approval, citing the commitments in the Third Joint Communique to gradually halt additional arms sales to Taiwan, it did not choose to downgrade its diplomatic relations with the United States.¹⁰² Former Ambassador J. Stapleton Roy explained to Romberg that this decision to not alter diplomatic relations was because China had viewed the approval as a political act garnered to gain domestic approval and reelection.¹⁰³ As a result, the failed reelection bid had a doubly negative

⁹⁸ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 150–54.

⁹⁹ Romberg, 150–54.

¹⁰⁰ Mann, *About Face*, 190–209.

¹⁰¹ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 150–54.

¹⁰² Romberg, 150–54.

¹⁰³ Romberg, 152–53.

impact. Even if China had not initially perceived this approval as a distinct shift away from the status quo, Romberg cites a deterioration in confidence that would carry over into the Clinton Administration.¹⁰⁴

While on a trip to China, former President Clinton made a statement on 30 June 1998 that delivered a political shockwave to Taiwan and the Legislative Branch of the United States.¹⁰⁵ While at the Shanghai Library, President Clinton responded to a reporter that he and Chinese President Jiang had discussed the United States' policy toward the issue of Taiwan.¹⁰⁶ Clinton goes on to state that "we don't support independence for Taiwan, or two Chinas, or one China-one Taiwan. And we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member in any organization for which statehood is a requirement."¹⁰⁷ Though Clinton continues in a following sentence that "our only policy has been that we think it has to be done peacefully,"¹⁰⁸ the diplomatic and domestic political damage had been done. Congress, having felt betrayed by the Executive Branch again regarding United States relations with Taiwan, passed resolutions reaffirming support for Taiwan within the weeks following President Clinton's summit to China. Similarly, former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui rebutted Clinton's statement in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed.¹⁰⁹ The Clinton Administration vehemently insisted that the "three no's" did not represent a change in policy, but was rather consistent with the policy of the preceding twenty years. During a press conference on 21 July 1998, President Clinton conveyed that the three pillars to his

¹⁰⁴ Romberg, 153–54.

¹⁰⁵ Robert Sutter, "Taiwan: The 'Three No's,' Congressional-Administration Differences, and U.S. Policy Issues," October 1, 1998, 7–10.

¹⁰⁶ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 184–85.

¹⁰⁷ White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by the President and the First Lady in Discussion on Shaping China for the 21st Century," June 30, 1998, <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/textonly/WH/New/China/19980630-3597.html>.

¹⁰⁸ White House Office of the Press Secretary.

¹⁰⁹ Teng-Hui Lee, "U.S. Can't Ignore Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, August 7, 1998, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/308350071/>.

China policy consisted of a reaffirmation of the TRA, encouragement of cross-Strait dialogue, and adherence to the One-China policy.¹¹⁰ Clinton's statement toned down the rhetoric immensely, thereby ensuring the maintenance of the status quo.¹¹¹

Cross-Strait tensions began to boil-over as a result of statements made by the former Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian that "there is 'one country on either side' of the Taiwan Strait (*yi bian, yi guo*) and that Taiwan was neither a part, nor a province, of another country."¹¹² Chen further crossed China's red line by offering that a public referendum should be administered to allow the 23 million people of Taiwan to determine the fate of Taiwan.¹¹³ Though diplomatic maneuvering by the United States, China, and Taiwan tried to prevent the situation from further spiraling, President Chen continued his rhetoric of plans for a referendum well into 2003. In a direct rebuke to Chen, President George W. Bush made clear that the policy of the United States is that "we oppose any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo, and the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally, to change the status quo, which we oppose."¹¹⁴ To this end, by explicitly stating the position of the United States, President Bush effectively ensured a return to the status quo, even if cross-Strait relations would remain strained throughout the remainder of President Chen's Administration.

H. CONCLUSION

These three joint communiques, the TRA, the Six Assurances, and various subsequent presidential statements form the basis for the One-China policy of the United

¹¹⁰ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 188.

¹¹¹ Romberg, 188–89.

¹¹² Romberg, 207.

¹¹³ Romberg, 207.

¹¹⁴ Brian Knowlton, "Bush Warns Taiwan to Keep Status Quo: China Welcomes U.S. Stance," *The New York Times*, December 10, 2003, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/10/news/bush-warns-taiwan-to-keep-status-quo-china-welcomes-us-stance.html>.

States.¹¹⁵ China has been provided the necessary concessions through its own interpretation of each of the joint communiques, even if these interpretations are not completely aligned with the actual position of the United States.¹¹⁶ At the same time, the TRA and Six Assurances has provided reassurances to Taiwan that it has not been abandoned in the process.¹¹⁷ When viewed from the perspective of catastrophic conflict avoidance, the One-China policy has been a resounding success. The ambiguity of the One-China policy has effectively served to deter both China and Taiwan from extreme attempts to unilaterally alter the status quo.¹¹⁸

Though not necessarily aligned with the original intent of President Nixon, the One-China policy continues to be adopted by the United States with the aspiration that China will liberalize away from its authoritative methods, including sentiments toward a definitive reunification of the wayward province of Taiwan. Despite this yearning, China is approaching great power status, while consistently maintaining its core position toward reunification, no matter the cost or consequence.¹¹⁹ In essence, the issue of Taiwan has continually been left for future generations to resolve, even as the danger and consequences continue to exponentially increase. If the Chinese rhetoric is to be believed, eventually the issue of Taiwan will come to a head, which brings us back to the contemporary setting of the Trump Administration.

Approximately three weeks after his inauguration, President Donald Trump spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping, in part to clarify his acceptance of the phone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, as well as his comments given during the Fox News

¹¹⁵ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 3.

¹¹⁶ Bush, 3.

¹¹⁷ Bush, 3.

¹¹⁸ Bush, 22.

¹¹⁹ Buckley and Horton, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option.”

interview alluded at the beginning of this chapter.¹²⁰ The White House readout of the phone call between President Trump and President Xi indicates that “President Trump agreed, at the request of President Xi, to honor our ‘One-China’ policy.”¹²¹ Interestingly, the official language would suggest that honoring of the One-China policy came at the behest of President Xi, not necessarily because President Trump had the desire to utter it unprompted. Seemingly at the time, the diplomatic gaffe had been corrected.

Though officially the One-China policy has not changed under the Trump administration, key actions taken seem to suggest that a policy shift may be underway. The Taiwan Travel Act has paved the way for much higher-level diplomatic exchanges among leaders in the United States and Taiwan.¹²² In September 2019, the AIT and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding certain consular functions.¹²³ Though this MOU is by no means unprecedented,¹²⁴ it does represent the latest example of AIT and TECRO efforts to deepen cooperation between the people of the United States and Taiwan.¹²⁵ More recently, President Trump signed the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019 into law on March 26, 2020. The TAIPEI Act directs the United States government to “support Taiwan in strengthening its official

¹²⁰ Ben Blanchard and Steve Holland, “Trump Changes Tack, Backs ‘One China’ Policy in Call with Xi,” Reuters, February 11, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-china-idUSKBN15P0ED>.

¹²¹ “Readout of the President’s Call with President Xi Jinping of China,” The White House, accessed October 16, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/readout-presidents-call-president-xi-jinping-china/>.

¹²² Aspinwall, “High-Level U.S. Visits to Taiwan Mark 40 Years of Unofficial Ties.”

¹²³ AIT and TECRO, “Memorandum of Understanding Between The American Institute in Taiwan and The Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States Regarding Certain Consular Functions,” September 13, 2019, <https://www.ait.org.tw/ait-and-tecro-sign-mou-regarding-certain-consular-functions/>.

¹²⁴ A full list of AIT and TECRO Agreements can be found at: <https://www.ait.org.tw/our-relationship/policy-history/ait-tecro-agreements/>

¹²⁵ “AIT and TECRO Sign MOU Regarding Certain Consular Functions,” American Institute in Taiwan, September 16, 2019, <https://www.ait.org.tw/ait-and-tecro-sign-mou-regarding-certain-consular-functions/>.

diplomatic relationships as well as other partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world.”¹²⁶

These endeavors, along with the recent authorization for arms sales to Taiwan,¹²⁷ may merely represent an upkeep of the One-China policy and a continuance of the status quo; but they could also signal a shift in policy toward relations between the United States and Taiwan. In either case, scholars and diplomats beg the question whether increasing relations with Taiwan remains in the national interest of the United States, or if instead a different policy approach is more appropriate. The following three chapters of this thesis will examine the primary policy option recommendations in context of the modern-rise of China.

¹²⁶ Gardner, “S.1678 - 116th Congress (2019-2020).”

¹²⁷ Zorham, Stone, and Zengerle, “U.S. State Department Approves Possible \$2.2 Billion Arms Sale to Taiwan.”

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III. ACCOMMODATE CHINA THROUGH AN ABANDONMENT OF COMMITMENTS TOWARD TAIWAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Scholars and policy experts recommending an abandonment of United States commitments toward Taiwan generally draw this conclusion based on their perception that the current construct does not properly emphasize the more important geostrategic relationship between the United States and China.¹²⁸ The commitments contained within the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) undermine the joint communiques between the United States and China, and place an unnecessary, and potentially tragic wedge that serves to prevent the best possible relations and international arrangements between the United States and China.¹²⁹ These scholars and policy experts argue that abandoning commitments toward Taiwan changes the relationship emphasis to one that favors China; the future of Taiwan was and remains the foundation of the One-China policy, and in turn, is the key impediment to improved relations between the United States and China.¹³⁰ Though this policy option contains persuasive merits, serious flaws in the argument become evident through deeper analysis. Supporting scholars and policy experts base their argument on the assertion that China is rapidly approaching economic and military parity with the United States.¹³¹ Though China has certainly achieved historic strides, the parity gap remains significantly larger than the scholars and policy experts advocating for an accommodation strategy assert. For this reason, this thesis has concluded that undergoing an accommodation policy option is unnecessary, while also potentially catastrophic.

The purpose of this chapter will be to further analyze this accommodating policy option in order to determine its relative persuasiveness and explanatory power to the other

¹²⁸ Chas Freeman, "A China Policy for the Twenty-First Century," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (Fall 2008): 25–26.

¹²⁹ Owens, "America Must Start Treating China as a Friend."

¹³⁰ Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?," 86–88.

¹³¹ Allison, *Destined for War*.

primary policy options. Through analysis, this chapter seeks to answer three primary research questions. First, why have supporting scholars and policy experts concluded that the current One-China policy is failing, and that a more accommodating approach is necessary? Second, what would be the key implementational tenets of this policy option if applied to the contemporary relationship between the United States and both China and Taiwan respectively? Third, what are the key advantages and disadvantages of adapting this policy option?

To answer these research questions, this chapter will consist of three primary sections of analysis. The first section will analyze the necessity of the accommodation policy option. The second section will elaborate upon the key tenets and implementation requirements of an accommodation strategy. The third section will list and analyze the key advantages and disadvantages of adopting an accommodation strategy.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE NECESSITY FOR AN ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The modern day rise of China is the most basic reasons used to support the policy option represented by an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan. First, scholars and policy experts state that this rise is quickly approaching parity with the United States, often even suggesting that parity has already been achieved or exceeded.¹³² Second, because of the nearing parity, the United States must adopt policies that are palatable, and therefore more satisfying to China in order to avoid a violent and dangerous struggle that would be predicted by the power transition theory,¹³³ also coined as the Thucydides Trap by Graham Allison as referenced in Chapter I.¹³⁴ Third, Robert Gilpin asserts that in order for a strategy of appeasement to be successful, it must be voluntarily conducted as early as

¹³² Allison.

¹³³ Ronald L. Tammen and Jacek Kugler, "Power Transition and China-US Conflicts," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1, no. 1 (July 1, 2006): 45–55, <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pol003>.

¹³⁴ Allison, *Destined for War*.

possible, long before a rising power approaches parity with the established power.¹³⁵ “Yet, not to retrench voluntarily and then to retrench in response to threats or military defeat means an even more severe loss of prestige and weakening of one’s diplomatic standing.”¹³⁶ Fourth, John Mearsheimer asserts that Taiwan, faced with nightmarish long term prospects relative to the rise of China, would probably be best served to unilaterally adopt the “Hong Kong strategy.”¹³⁷ Though stopping short of directly recommending that the United States abandon Taiwan, an abandonment becomes overcome by events should Taiwan unilaterally pursue the realpolitik strategy proposed by Mearsheimer. Fifth, Hugh White contends that the changed geostrategic environment requires that the United States be willing to share power with China.¹³⁸ A key element of this power sharing is a significant reduction in the United States’ East Asian commitments, including those provided to Taiwan.¹³⁹ White continues to state that “there is no reason for the United States to oppose eventual, peaceful, consensual reunification of Taiwan with China, and every reason to encourage it.”¹⁴⁰ For these reasons, scholars and policy experts in support of this policy option recommend that the United States prioritize its relationship with China over that of Taiwan. The next subsections will analyze the factuality of the argument that China is approaching parity with the United States in terms of economic and military power.

1. Economic Parity?

Tables 1 and 2 depict key economic metrics for both China and the United States for the years 1980 and 2018 (1980 is the earliest year available on the IMF website, while

¹³⁵ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 193–97.

¹³⁶ Gilpin, 194.

¹³⁷ John J. Mearsheimer, “Say Goodbye to Taiwan,” *The National Interest*, February 25, 2014, <https://nationalinterest.org/article/say-goodbye-taiwan-9931>.

¹³⁸ Hugh White, *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹³⁹ White, 94–97.

¹⁴⁰ White, 97.

at the same time is generally representative of the time period at which normalization occurred). These two tables depict the vast Chinese economic growth achieved between the two periods, while also showing the relative comparison to that of the United States. Specifically, these tables offer four key insights. First, though the United States annual gross domestic product (GDP) was 10X higher than China in 1980, this gap has closed considerably, now representing a difference of approximately 1.5X in favor of the United States. Though this gap has narrowed drastically, therefore lending support for the rising China argument, the difference in terms of dollars remains substantial and is in excess of \$7 Trillion dollars. Second, when converted for purchasing power parity, the Chinese GDP exceeds the United States. Graham Allison's Thucydides Trap Project prefers a comparison of GDP after having been converted to PPP to convey extra emphasis of the sheer size of the Chinese economy. Third, differences remain very large when adjusted to a per capita basis, a measurement that Michael Beckley offers is more representative of the efficiency of the economy.¹⁴¹ In other words, the 2018 Chinese GDP per capita is merely 15% of the 2018 United States GDP per capita, suggesting that the United States' economy is nearly seven times more efficient than the Chinese economy. The final key insight uses a measurement of GDP X GDP per capita that will be referred to as the "Beckley Index" for the purposes of this thesis.¹⁴² Beckley argues that this measurement is a better determinant of economic power that better accounts for economic stock (Beckley calls "net resources").¹⁴³ Measuring the relative stock of the respective economies can prove superior to a mere comparison of the flows (represented by annual GDP) because it accounts for the accumulated gains that have been achieved throughout the period, as opposed to merely the annual gain.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, a relative comparison using the Beckley

¹⁴¹ Michael Beckley, "The Power of Nations: Measuring What Matters," *International Security* 43, no. 2 (November 23, 2018): 17–19.

¹⁴² Beckley does not offer a clear name for his proxy formula. I took the liberty to attribute to Beckley by referring to this calculation as the "Beckley Index."

¹⁴³ Beckley, "The Power of Nations," 17–19.

¹⁴⁴ Beckley, 17–19.

Index suggests that the Chinese economic stock remains less than 10% of the economic stock of the United States.

Table 1. 1980 Key Economic Metrics for China and the United States (in current U.S. Dollars).¹⁴⁵

	China	United States
GDP	\$305.348 Billion	\$2857.325 Billion
GDP PPP	\$305.579 Billion	\$2857.325 Billion
GDP Per Capita	\$309.354	\$12,552.943
GDP per Capita PPP	\$309.588	\$12,552.943

Table 2. 2018 Key Economic Metrics for China and the United States (in current U.S. Dollars).¹⁴⁶

	China	United States
GDP	\$13,368.073 Billion	\$20,580.25 Billion
GDP PPP	\$25,278.767 Billion	\$20,580.25 Billion
GDP Per Capita	\$9580.239	\$62,868.917
GDP per Capita PPP	\$18,116.045	\$62,868.917
Beckley Index	\$128,069.334 Trillion	\$1,293,858.029 Trillion
Beckley Index PPP	\$457,951.281 Trillion	\$1,293,858.029 Trillion

A closer analysis of these figures quickly dispels the economic related concerns offered by scholars and policy experts supporting a withdrawal of commitments toward Taiwan. First, though GDP PPP is the preferred measure of comparison because it tends to offer greater support for their argument, GDP PPP is misleading when used to make a relative comparison of economic power. GDP PPP is useful for domestic consumption cost comparison between different countries; however, it does not accurately portray the

¹⁴⁵ Adapted from “Key Economic Metrics for China and the United States (1980-2018),” International Monetary Fund, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/02/weodata/weorept.aspx?sy=1980&ey=2018&scsm=1&ssd=1&sort=country&ds=.&br=1&c=924%2C111&s=NGDPD%2CPPPGDP%2CNGDPDPC%2CPPPPC&grp=0&a=&pr.x=63&pr.y=7>.

¹⁴⁶ Adapted from “Key Economic Metrics for China and the United States (1980-2018).”

spending power for goods purchased on international markets.¹⁴⁷ Second, the differences in economic stock represented by the Beckley Index are stark and will continue to increase up until the point that China achieves economic parity with the United States (as measured by GDP). Only at this point of economic parity (and beyond) will the stock difference begin to contract and reverse. Though economic parity is predicted in the coming future, overcoming the existent stock differences will require decades of sustained economic growth that matches or exceeds the most recent (declining) growth rate of 6.0%.¹⁴⁸ Finally, though this most recent GDP growth rate of 6.0% dwarfs that of the most recent figure for the United States (2.1%),¹⁴⁹ China will be severely challenged to maintain a growth rate this high. This is already evident by the deceleration that has occurred and that 6.0% represents the slowest pace in nearly thirty years.¹⁵⁰ The Political Economist Dwight Perkins expects that this downward trend will continue even if China proves capable of avoiding the middle-income trap; since the time that Perkins' *East Asia Development* was published (2013), China's economy has followed the declining trajectory predicted by Perkins.¹⁵¹

2. Military Parity?

The most common method for determining a state's military power analyzes total annual defense expenditures; however, it does not take account the accumulation of

¹⁴⁷ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Purchasing Power Parities - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - OECD," n.d., <http://www.oecd.org/sdd/purchasingpowerparities-frequentlyaskedquestionsfaqs.htm>.

¹⁴⁸ Reuters, "Instant View: China Third-Quarter GDP Grows 6.0% Year-on-Year, Misses Expectations," Reuters, October 17, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-economy-gdp-instantview/china-third-quarter-gdp-grows-6-year-on-year-misses-expectations-idUSKBN1WX07J>.

¹⁴⁹ Reuters, "US Third-Quarter Economic Growth Unrevised at 2.1%," Reuters, December 20, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/20/us-gdp-q3-2019-final-reading.html>.

¹⁵⁰ Reuters, "Instant View: China Third-Quarter GDP Grows 6.0% Year-on-Year, Misses Expectations."

¹⁵¹ Dwight H. Perkins, *East Asian Development: Foundations and Strategies*, The Edwin O. Reischauer Lectures (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 159–74.

capability that is inherently required for complex military systems.¹⁵² According to Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “annual military expenditures measure flow—but flows over many years produce a stock of military capability.”¹⁵³ In other words, a simple comparison of differing state’s defense expenditures for a given year is incomplete. Greater context is gathered through analyzing the accumulation of defense expenditures (sum of annual “flows”) over a specified period to account for a “stock” of military capability.¹⁵⁴ The most obvious observance of a state’s stock of military capability is the accumulation of complex military systems, such as aircraft carriers, submarines, and military aircraft.¹⁵⁵ Less obvious, but equally important to the operation of these complex military systems, are what Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes call “software.”¹⁵⁶ The software is the accumulation of institutional knowledge gained from long term training, education, doctrine, and research and development.¹⁵⁷

Table 3 depicts the total reported defense expenditures by the United States and China since 2010. Through analysis of this information, three key insights become evident. First, the United States’ defense expenditure flows vastly exceed those of China for every year since 2010. Second, China’s stock of military capability since 2010 (\$1,703,062M) is less than one third of the United States’ military stock for the same period (\$6,064,432M). Put another way, the total difference of stock of military capability is approximately eighteen times greater than the 2018 Chinese defense expenditure flow (\$4,361,370M vs.

¹⁵² Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-First Century: China’s Rise and the Fate of America’s Global Position,” *International Security* 40, no. 3 (January 2016): 17–18, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00225.

¹⁵³ Brooks and Wohlforth, 19.

¹⁵⁴ The remainder of this section will utilize Wohlforth and Brooks’ term “flow” as a proxy for the annual defense expenditure amount for each country. Similarly, the term “stock” will represent the sum of these flows.

¹⁵⁵ Brooks and Wohlforth, “The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers in the Twenty-First Century,” 21–22.

¹⁵⁶ Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, *Red Star over the Pacific: China’s Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 216.

¹⁵⁷ Yoshihara and Holmes, 216.

\$239,223M). Third, this military stock gap will continue to grow for as long as the United States' annual flow exceeds China's annual flow. The gap will only begin to close when the Chinese annual flow begins to exceed the United States'. To be sure, Table 3 only depicts the flows and stock since 2010; the actual stock gap is much larger if accounting for preceding periods during which the United States' defense expenditures far exceeded China's.

Table 3. Total (Reported) Defense Expenditures (in constant 2017 U.S. Million Dollars).¹⁵⁸

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
USA	784,835	775,156	731,086	673,102	631,513	616,483	612,889	605,803	633,565	6,064,432
China	137,890	148,656	161,441	176,476	191,627	204,202	215,718	227,829	239,223	1,703,062
Difference	646,945	626,500	569,645	496,626	439,886	412,281	397,171	377,974	394,342	4,361,370

Table 4 depicts defense expenditures as a percent of GDP for both the United States and China since 2010, providing three additional insights into the respective military power of the two countries. First, for the period since 2010, the United States has had a consistently higher percentage of GDP allocated to defense expenditures. Second, the percent of GDP allocation for China has remained relatively constant at about 2% for every year since 2010. Third, China would have to increase its current percent of GDP allocation by nearly 70% to match the allocation of the United States. When considering that the continued improvement of domestic economic conditions is a key pillar upholding the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP),¹⁵⁹ a significant increased proportion to match or exceed the allocation of the United States of GDP allocated for defense expenditures would be domestically challenging.

¹⁵⁸ Adapted from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," SIPRI, accessed December 10, 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

¹⁵⁹ Marc Lanteigne, *Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction*, Fourth edition (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 80.

Table 4. Defense Expenditures (Reported) as a percent of GDP.¹⁶⁰

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
USA	4.7%	4.6%	4.2%	3.8%	3.5%	3.3%	3.2%	3.1%	3.2%
China	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
Difference	2.8%	2.8%	2.4%	1.9%	1.6%	1.4%	1.3%	1.2%	1.3%

This analysis of the Chinese military power highly suggests that the military prowess of the United States has and will likely continue to far exceed that of China for the foreseeable future,¹⁶¹ thereby discrediting the military power related concerns offered by scholars and policy experts recommending a withdrawal of commitments toward Taiwan. Put another way, Chinese military power is not rapidly approaching parity, despite the often-used rhetoric that China is now a peer threat of the United States.

Though this analysis alone appears quite compelling, this discrediting is further strengthened if one considers two additional variables. First, China has several territorial disputes along its borders that represent potential military flashpoints, and therefore require due diligence in terms of military planning and expenditures (specifically Japan, India, Russia, Vietnam, and Taiwan to name a few).¹⁶² Second, the United States has an asymmetric nuclear weapon capability advantage, both in terms of offensive weapons and the ability to defend against Chinese nuclear weapon capabilities.¹⁶³ That said, the mere presence of a Chinese nuclear weapon capability serves as a significant deterrent to Taiwan to provoke or otherwise unilaterally attempt to alter the status quo, because of the ambiguity in the One-China policy and in spite of China's no first use policy.¹⁶⁴ Similarly, the inherent ambiguity of the TRA as to whether the United States will come to the defense

¹⁶⁰ Adapted from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database."

¹⁶¹ Beckley, "The Power of Nations," 44.

¹⁶² Lanteigne, *Chinese Foreign Policy*, 5–6.

¹⁶³ Eric Heginbotham et al., *China's Evolving Nuclear Deterrent: Major Drivers and Issues for the United States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1628.html.

¹⁶⁴ Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War?," 86–87.

of Taiwan, particularly when considering nuclear weapons, serves as a significant deterrent to China.¹⁶⁵ Though this mutual nuclear deterrent brings credit to the argument and conclusions posed by Charles Glaser as presented in Chapter I, he does not seem to consider the disproportionate lack of economic and military parity posited above. Therefore, Glaser's argument is also not compelling in terms of necessity for a change to the inherent strategic ambiguity in the One-China policy.

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

The analysis of the implementation steps necessary for an accommodation strategy will consist of two subsections. The first subsection will analyze the steps necessary for a literal, even extreme adoption of an accommodation strategy. The second subsection will analyze the implementation steps for a lighter, more practical accommodation.

1. Extreme Accommodation Policy Option

Scholars and policy experts recommending an abandonment of United States' commitments toward Taiwan base their recommendation on the belief that the United States relationship with the rising China is more important to the national security of the United States. This extreme accommodation policy option consists of four key implementational tenets. First, additional weapons sales to Taiwan should be immediately be halted.¹⁶⁶ Weapons sales to Taiwan have long poisoned the more important relationship between the United States and China, and therefore a continuation will serve to further increase friction within the international system. The United States made a commitment in the Third Joint Communique of 1982 to gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan,¹⁶⁷ yet to date it has continually failed to uphold its end of the bargain. This commitment, especially

¹⁶⁵ Glaser, 86–87.

¹⁶⁶ Owens, "America Must Start Treating China as a Friend."

¹⁶⁷ Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982* (Government Printing Office, 1985), 1038–39.

considering the rise of China, should have a compelling effect on the leadership of the United States to halt further armament efforts to Taiwan.

Second, the United States shall rescind the legislation contained within the TRA.¹⁶⁸ The Taiwan Relations Act directly undermines the tenets of the three joint communiques and run counter to the improved relationship that had been envisioned by Nixon and Mao. By moving away from this legislation, the United States would send a clear signal to China that the United States pragmatically favors its relationship to China over the relationship with Taiwan.

Third, the United States shall place a higher emphasis toward its commitments contained within each of the three joint communiques. This would in part be accomplished by a repeal of the Taiwan Relations Act, but additional action would prove more reassuring to China. The United States One-China policy should be stated unambiguously, such as when President Clinton conveyed his “three no’s.”¹⁶⁹ Though an adherence to the tenets of the previous joint communiques would be highly reassuring to China, the changes in the geostrategic environment for both China and the United States may warrant that a new commitment take the form of a fourth joint communique.

Fourth, the United States shall unambiguously state that it no longer feels obliged by the Six Assurances to Taiwan, and therefore is not compelled to defend Taiwan, even if China acts to unilaterally alter the status quo. Repeal of the TRA and recommitment to the joint communiques (or adopting a new joint communique) would already be highly reassuring to China; however, this reassurance would be further cemented through presidential statements that draw away from previous assurances to Taiwan.

¹⁶⁸ Owens, “America Must Start Treating China as a Friend.”

¹⁶⁹ Sutter, “Taiwan: The ‘Three No’s,’ Congressional-Administration Differences, and U.S. Policy Issues.”

2. Light Accommodation Policy Option

A potentially more practical policy adoption would address many of the same implementation steps noted above, however, would seek to achieve far less provocatively. This light accommodation policy option would consist of two key implementation tenets.

First, a gradual reduction of arms sales to Taiwan remains necessary, eventually halting all future sales altogether. As Owens alludes, this gradual halt should be based on a reciprocal reduction of cross strait threat posed by China to Taiwan.¹⁷⁰ As a first step, the United States could adopt an apprehensive stance towards future arms sales to Taiwan, making it clear to China that this apprehension seeks a Beijing response to reduce and eliminate the short-range missile threat posed to Taiwan.¹⁷¹ If China responds according to the desires of the United States, this could pave a path for further reductions, with an eventual termination of future arms sales to Taiwan.

Second, the United States would need to signal or explicitly state a more unambiguous stance toward the commitments contained in both the TRA and each of the three joint communiques. A complete legislation reversal away from the TRA will likely prove domestically challenging to the United States,¹⁷² evidenced by recent unanimous passage of the Taiwan Travel Act¹⁷³ and the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act.¹⁷⁴ Along similar lines, an emplacement of higher emphasis toward the three joint communiques could be perceived as an abandonment of Taiwan, as had been the case with the original adoption of the TRA by Congress. Understanding the inherent challenges that will be encountered from a stark and swift accommodation policy adoption, Glaser recommends that “a gradual easing of

¹⁷⁰ Owens, “America Must Start Treating China as a Friend.”

¹⁷¹ Owens.

¹⁷² Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 27–29.

¹⁷³ Chabot, “Text - H.R.535 - 115th Congress (2017-2018).”

¹⁷⁴ Gardner, “S.1678 - 116th Congress (2019-2020).”

commitments is likely best, as opposed to a sharp, highly advertised break.”¹⁷⁵ Key to this statement is avoiding the domestic and international publicity that would be inherent to repealing the TRA or over emphasizing the three joint communiques. As a way of avoiding the ramifications of a public debate, a fourth communique would be necessary. Unlike the three joint communiques that were strictly between the United States and China, a fourth communique could seek to include Taiwan, thereby better reflecting the democratic will of Taiwan.

Despite the implications to Taiwan discussed in the above extreme and light accommodation policy options, scholars and policy experts in favor of this policy option adamantly insist that their views are pragmatically drawn from the rise of China, and therefore should not be viewed exclusively as an abandonment of Taiwan. To Graham Allison, this is undoubtedly an “ugly” strategy, however, also one that must be considered to accommodate the growing power and prestige of an ascendant China.¹⁷⁶ Charles Glaser has argued that a curtailment of commitments toward Taiwan could provide the United States with a significant amount of leverage and negotiating power to compel Chinese concessions elsewhere in the region.¹⁷⁷

D. ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

An adoption of any United States policy that backs away from commitments toward Taiwan offers several advantages that could result from an accommodation toward China. At the same time, this type of policy also contains inherent disadvantages and risks. To be sure, when analyzed separate from one another, the advantages and the disadvantages are both compelling. However, when taken together, as they must be, the appearance reflects a reprioritization of the relationship with China at the direct expense to the United States’

¹⁷⁵ Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?,” 88.

¹⁷⁶ Allison, *Destined for War*, 220–22.

¹⁷⁷ Charles L. Glaser, “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation,” *International Security* 39, no. 4 (April 2015): 78–83, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00199.

relationship with Taiwan. For the purposes of this chapter, three key advantages and three key disadvantages will be discussed.

1. Advantages

First and probably foremost, an accommodation strategy would remove the foundational dispute between the United States and China.¹⁷⁸ Some scholars have concluded that this is the preeminent disagreement that could quickly escalate up to and including nuclear conflict between the United States and China.¹⁷⁹ Much of this rationale is derived from the regional implications of Chinese overreach to non-peacefully alter the status quo, but which could quickly spiral to regional, or even global conflict. As such, an accommodation on the future of Taiwan could significantly decrease the potential that a conflict with China might involve an exchange of nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁰ To be sure, the United States would have to persuade its regional allies that a United States accommodation on the future of Taiwan is also within each of their respective national interests, and that this abandonment of commitments is not a foreshadowing of their own future relationship with the United States.¹⁸¹ This advantage could be achieved through adoption of either the extreme or light accommodation policy option.

Second, an accommodation strategy would reprioritize the United States relationship with China to be of greater consequence than that of Taiwan.¹⁸² Scholars and policy experts in support of this policy option would argue that the great power competition with China has more profound national interest implications to the United States than the continued prosperity of Taiwan, and so a prioritization of relationships should be

¹⁷⁸ Glaser, 69.

¹⁷⁹ Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?,” 87.

¹⁸⁰ Glaser, 87–88.

¹⁸¹ Glaser, “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?,” 77–78.

¹⁸² Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?,” 87.

reflected.¹⁸³ However, the advantageous effects of this reprioritization remain only if China in turn decides to maintain the status quo, or at least does not attempt to non-peacefully alter the status of Taiwan. This advantage would become more apparent through an adoption of the extreme accommodation policy option, though China may be satisfied by an adoption of the light accommodation policy.

Third, an accommodation strategy has the potential for a grand bargain with China over other regional and global matters.¹⁸⁴ Glaser and Allison have both argued that an accommodation with China over the future of Taiwan could lead to Chinese concessions in areas of higher national interest to the United States. These concessions could potentially include a stronger Chinese hand in resolving North Korean nuclear proliferation¹⁸⁵ or concessions to its territorial claims in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.¹⁸⁶ Particularly because the economic and military power parity gap is very large, the United States will be entering a negotiation from a position of relative strength. Through adhering to Robert Gilpin's advice to accommodate early, the United States would have profoundly more leverage now than anticipated in the future, and so would likely be able to achieve a grander bargain the sooner it acts.¹⁸⁷ By delaying, the leverage begins to diminish, in turn decreasing the potential benefits of achieving a great power agreement. However, this only remains an advantage if a negotiated settlement is voluntarily followed through and not later reneged. This advantage could be achieved through adoption of either the extreme or light accommodation policy option.

2. Disadvantages

First, an accommodation strategy would come at the direct cost of the United States relationship with Taiwan. In fact, it could very well lead to the end of a democratic Taiwan

¹⁸³ Glaser, "A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?," 71–72.

¹⁸⁴ Glaser, 50.

¹⁸⁵ Allison, *Destined for War*, 220–22.

¹⁸⁶ Glaser, "A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?," 50.

¹⁸⁷ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 193–97.

should China feel emboldened to reunify Taiwan with the mainland. Taiwan is a quintessential example of a vibrant democracy, and so an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan would run directly counter to the democratic values that the United States has long advocated for globally. Abandoning commitments toward Taiwan would probably equate to the final straw of the already dire and nearly inconsequential international recognition of Taiwan. An abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan could in turn have repercussions for other globally burgeoning democracies, particularly if abandonment is followed by reunification. This disadvantage is possible if either the extreme or light accommodation policy option is adopted, though is certainly more likely with an adoption of the extreme option.

Second, an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan would have direct consequences to the credibility of the United States toward its regional alliances.¹⁸⁸ Even if encapsulated with Chinese concessions in the East China Sea, Japan would ponder the strength of its alliance with the United States.¹⁸⁹ Similarly, Chinese concessions in the South China Sea may have the exact opposite effect desired by the United States. Southeast Asian states may feel compelled to contemplate taking a side with either China or the United States as a result of the perceived diminishing regional influence of the United States.¹⁹⁰ South Korea could reflect upon its feelings that the United States would maintain its commitments contained in the bilateral mutual defense treaty.¹⁹¹ For these reasons, John Mearsheimer has argued that “policy makers in Washington will go to great lengths to avoid that outcome and instead maintain America’s reputation as a reliable partner.”¹⁹² Mearsheimer further asserts that “this means they [the United States] will be inclined to

¹⁸⁸ Glaser, “A U.S.-China Grand Bargain?,” 77–78.

¹⁸⁹ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 32.

¹⁹⁰ Tucker and Glaser, 33.

¹⁹¹ Tucker and Glaser, 33.

¹⁹² Mearsheimer, “Say Goodbye to Taiwan.”

back Taiwan no matter what.”¹⁹³ In short, an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan could completely implode the United States’ regional alliance system. This disadvantage is possible if either the extreme or light accommodation policy option is adopted, though is certainly more likely with an adoption of the extreme option.

Third, China may not actually be appeased by an abandonment of United States commitments toward Taiwan.¹⁹⁴ Much like Hitler was not appeased by the Munich Agreement, China may feel emboldened to exert further influence in the region, particularly among its various territorial disputes. Undergoing an abandonment strategy would have already had a profoundly negative impact to the international prestige of the United States that would become exponentially worse by an unappeased China.¹⁹⁵ In fact, because of the above listed disadvantages that would be encountered in undergoing an abandonment strategy, an unappeased China would likely result in the end of an era of United States East Asian regional influence, a likelihood that would certainly be contained within the original Chinese calculus.¹⁹⁶ This disadvantage is possible if either the extreme or light accommodation policy option is adopted.

E. CONCLUSION

Despite the drastic change in the geostrategic environment and return to great power competition, an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan is unnecessary and potentially catastrophic to the credibility of the United States. The claims by Chas Freeman, Charles Glaser, Graham Allison, and Bill Owens that China is approaching economic and military parity with the United States do not appear to be entirely warranted. Though China has and will continue to make historic economic and military improvements, the United States’ withdrawal from its commitments to Taiwan would be a premature concession.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Mearsheimer.

¹⁹⁴ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 33.

¹⁹⁵ Tucker and Glaser, 25.

¹⁹⁶ Tucker and Glaser, 24–25.

¹⁹⁷ Denny Roy, “The Problem with Premature Appeasement,” *Survival* 55, no. 3 (July 1, 2013): 192, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2013.802861>.

The relative economic and military power parity gap remains extremely large and will continue to widen for the foreseeable future. In terms of economic power, the United States' economic stock as measured by the "Beckley Index," is an order of magnitude larger than China's economic stock. This gap will only stop becoming wider after China has achieved parity; only then will China begin the decades or longer process of overcoming the vast difference in economic power. In terms of military power, the United States' military stock as measured by cumulative defense expenditures, remains nearly four times greater than China's military stock. This gap will only stop becoming wider after China has matched the annual defense expenditures of the United States; only then will China begin the decades or longer process of overcoming the vast differences in military power. Because economic and military power parity remains unforeseeable, the United States is not incentivized to consider an accommodation to China, even if conducting an accommodation early may provide a more favorable agreement. The risk posed by a potentially unappeased China outweighs the potential benefits of a grand bargain. This risk and lack of incentivization to accommodate becomes even more apparent when considering the catastrophic effects to the credibility of the United States that would be a consequence of accommodation.

The recent protest movements in Hong Kong largely dispel any credible merit to the "Hong Kong Strategy" suggested by Mearsheimer, further evidenced by the overwhelming re-election of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen. As such, the necessity to abandon commitments toward Taiwan appears unnecessary, even if continued support to Taiwan displeases China. Besides the significant loss of international prestige and influence, domestic politics within the United States would hinder an adoption of an accommodation strategy, as evident by the continually strong bipartisan congressional support for the Taiwan Relations Act. Though this strategy does contain highly persuasive advantages, the disadvantages are more conclusive, particularly the challenge presented in enforcing a potentially unappeased China; therefore, an undertaking of this proportion is extremely dangerous. If significantly lacking economic and military parity is deemed credible, then one would be compelled to ponder why the United States would consider abandoning the vibrant and example setting democracy in Taiwan. The next chapter will

explore this question further through analyzing the merits of whether the United States would be better served by doubling down on efforts to support Taiwan.

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IV. CONFRONT CHINA THROUGH A DOUBLE-DOWN OF COMMITMENTS TOWARD TAIWAN

A. INTRODUCTION

Scholars and policy experts recommending a doubling-down of commitments toward Taiwan generally draw this conclusion based on their perception of the necessity that the United States assert strength in the ongoing great power competition with China.¹⁹⁸ This perception is further reinforced when considering the vibrant democracy that Taiwan has become in the recent thirty years.¹⁹⁹ These scholars and policy experts argue that protecting the democracy in Taiwan is reason enough to confront China, however, maintaining the regional credibility of the United States is equally important.²⁰⁰ They contend that the three joint communiques are outdated and do not represent the values of the United States, even considering the rise of China.²⁰¹ Furthermore, because of the great power competition with China, upholding the commitments toward Taiwan in both the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and Reagan's Six Assurances become even more vital to the national interest of the United States. Though support for Taiwan comes at direct expense to the United States' relationship with China, regional credibility through the protection of democratic values provides more leverage, and thereby influence in containing the threat posed by a rising China.²⁰² Much like the abandonment policy option, confronting China through supporting Taiwan has persuasive merits; however, deeper analysis demonstrates that this policy option is just as dangerous, albeit in different ways. For this reason, this thesis concludes that doubling-down on commitments toward Taiwan is too provocative, and therefore this policy option should not be adopted.

¹⁹⁸ Tucker and Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?," 23–25.

¹⁹⁹ Tucker and Glaser, 26.

²⁰⁰ Bolton, "Revisit the 'One-China Policy.'"

²⁰¹ Bolton.

²⁰² Tucker and Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?," 32–36.

The purpose of this chapter will be to further analyze this confrontational policy option in order to determine its relative persuasiveness and explanatory power to the other primary policy options. Through analysis, this chapter seeks to answer three primary research questions. First, why have supporting scholars and policy experts concluded that the current One-China policy is failing, and that the United States should instead double-down on its efforts to arm and help protect the democratic Taiwan? Second, what would be the key implementational tenets of this policy option if applied to the contemporary relationship between the United States and both China and Taiwan respectively? Third, what are the key advantages and disadvantages of adopting this policy option?

To answer these research questions, this chapter will consist of three primary sections of analysis. The first section will analyze the necessity of the doubling-down policy option. The second section will elaborate upon the key tenets and implementation requirements of a doubling-down strategy. The third section will identify and analyze the key advantages and disadvantages of adopting a doubling-down strategy.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE NECESSITY FOR A DOUBLING-DOWN STRATEGY

Scholars and policy experts that advocate for a strategy of doubling-down on the United States' commitments toward Taiwan generally form their argument based on one of two primary reasons—or both. First, the United States and China have entered a period of great power competition, and so the United States must be postured to compete with China in all arenas, including the future of Taiwan.²⁰³ Second, Taiwan is a vibrant democracy consisting of an increasingly unique identity that appears to be distinctly different from the Chinese identity on the mainland.²⁰⁴ This section seeks to analyze these two primary arguments to determine the necessity for adopting a policy that would double-down on commitments toward Taiwan.

²⁰³ Tucker and Glaser, 24–27.

²⁰⁴ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

1. Confront China

A large part of the focus of the most recent National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy state that the United States has returned to an era of great power competition. As President Trump states in the National Security Strategy, “These competitions require the United States to rethink the policies of the past two decades—policies based on the assumption that engagement with rivals and their inclusion in international institutions and global commerce would turn them into benign actors and trustworthy partners. For the most part, this premise turned out to be false.”²⁰⁵ Relatedly, former Secretary of Defense Mattis states in the National Defense Strategy that “in competition short of armed conflict, revisionist powers ... [are using] the threat or use of military force to change the facts on the ground.”²⁰⁶ Given the context of these two statements and the continual renewal of China’s pledge to reunify Taiwan to the mainland using any measure necessary,²⁰⁷ advocates argue that the United States must confront China over its hostile influence and rhetoric toward the future status of Taiwan.²⁰⁸ The United States must take this action as a means of checking the modern day rise of China, demonstrating that the international order will not accept Chinese efforts to bully or coerce other regional actors.²⁰⁹ In this simple view, the argument at first appears compelling. However, the rhetoric of the modern day rise of China is very often over emphasized, especially when viewed in cumulative economic and military power parity relative to the United States (as discussed in Chapter III).²¹⁰ So, confronting China on such an explosive issue that has dominated the bilateral dialogue for the better part of a half century carries

²⁰⁵ Donald J. Trump, “National Security Strategy of the United States of America,” December 2017, 3, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

²⁰⁶ Jim Mattis, “National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” 2018, 5.

²⁰⁷ Buckley and Horton, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option.”

²⁰⁸ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

²⁰⁹ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 32–33.

²¹⁰ Beckley, “The Power of Nations.”

an undue amount of danger and risk, thereby supporting an argument that the adoption of this policy option is unnecessary.

The second part of the confronting China argument recommends that the United States bolster Taiwan's ability to defend itself through an increase of arms sales to Taiwan, both in terms of quantity and quality, well beyond those sales that have occurred in the past.²¹¹ On the surface, this part of the argument also appears reasonable. However, Michael Beckley has recently argued that Taiwan is already quite capable of defending itself against China, despite the clear asymmetry of relative military capabilities between China and Taiwan.²¹² Beckley's argument echoes the concerns of the United States military in its own ability to project power in East Asia as a result of Chinese Anti-Access / Area Denial (A2AD); however, Beckley turns the tables slightly to demonstrate how China would face this same critical power projection task in any attempts to militarily alter the Cross-Strait status quo.²¹³ Beckley concludes, "China, therefore, probably could not conquer Taiwan, despite the absence of U.S. intervention."²¹⁴ Given this, and the ambiguity as to whether or not the United States might actually come to Taiwan's aid in the event of Chinese military adventurism, China does not present the existential threat to Taiwan that is often portrayed.²¹⁵ Doubling-down would not have a doubling of deterrent result; instead, doubling-down would doubly provoke. Therefore, doubling-down on commitments toward Taiwan beyond what has been achieved through the status quo of the United States' One-China policy, is unnecessary.

²¹¹ Tucker and Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?," 33–36.

²¹² Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China's Neighbors Can Check Chinese Naval Expansion," *International Security* 42, no. 2 (November 8, 2017): 83–95.

²¹³ Beckley, 83–90.

²¹⁴ Beckley, 90.

²¹⁵ Beckley, 83–95.

2. Democracy and Identity in Taiwan

The second primary argument for bolstering commitments toward Taiwan has to do with preserving the vibrant democracy and unique identity in Taiwan. Taiwan's fairly high democratic ranking of 31 among all global states,²¹⁶ along with the increasingly growing Taiwan identity,²¹⁷ make the argument for adopting this policy option compelling, particularly if these ideals can only be preserved through an increase of United States commitments toward Taiwan. This particular aspect would likely generate a great deal of domestic support among the American people, and certainly also among the populace in Taiwan. However, the provocative nature toward China of adopting this policy option would increase the danger, risk, and stakes considerably, in a way that would likely prove to decrease the safety and security of the people of Taiwan.²¹⁸ This reason, along with Beckley's argument above that Taiwan's capabilities are already deterring (with the aid of arms sales administered under the current One-China policy and the inherent strategic ambiguity), decisively demonstrate that an adoption of this policy option does not factor well in a cost-benefit analysis, and therefore may be dismissed.

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF A DOUBLING-DOWN STRATEGY

The analyzation of the implementation steps necessary for a doubling-down strategy will consist of two subsections. The first subsection will analyze the step necessary for a literal, even extreme adoption of a doubling-down strategy. The second subsection will analyze the implementation steps necessary for a lighter, more practical bolstering of commitments toward Taiwan.

²¹⁶ The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2019: A Year of Democratic Setbacks and Popular Protest* (London: The Economist, 2019), 10, <http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy-Index-2019.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=democracyindex2019>.

²¹⁷ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, "Taiwanese / Chinese Identity (1992/06~2019/06)," June 2019, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=166#>.

²¹⁸ Tammen and Kugler, "Power Transition and China–US Conflicts," 46–52.

1. Extreme Doubling-Down Option

Much like the accommodating strategy, the language contained in the key guiding documents are problematic. While the accommodating strategy finds fault in language focused on relations with Taiwan, the confrontational strategy instead emphasizes these same elements, seeking to bolster where possible. As such, adopting an extreme doubling-down confrontational strategy would consist of five key tenets.

First, because a literal interpretation of the three joint communiques appears undermining to a democratically independent Taiwan, the contents of these agreements should be completely deemphasized.²¹⁹ Though the United States merely “acknowledges”²²⁰ the position of the Chinese in the Shanghai Communique, this acknowledgement has served to continue to embolden the Chinese position that Taiwan is a wayward province in need of reunification with the mainland.²²¹ Similarly, though the United States “recognizes”²²² the PRC as the sole legal government of China as jointly agreed in the Normalization Communique, this recognition, particularly when taken together with the acknowledgement statement of the Shanghai Communique, undermines the people and government in Taiwan.²²³ Though the 1982 Communique is not quite as detrimental to the Taiwan position as the other two communiques, the suggestion that “favorable conditions for the settlement of United States-China differences over the question of United States Arms sales to Taiwan,”²²⁴ is as equally untrue today as it was when originally written. Given the disparities in focus toward Taiwan, a confrontational

²¹⁹ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

²²⁰ Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1975, Volume XVII, China 1969–1972, “Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of the People’s Republic of China. Commonly Referred as the ‘Shanghai Communique.’”

²²¹ Buckley and Horton, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option.”

²²² “Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the People’s Republic of China. Commonly Referred to as the ‘Normalization Communique.’”

²²³ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

²²⁴ Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982*, 1038–39.

strategy requires a deemphasis of all three of these joint communiques. A denouncement or formal reinterpretation of these communiques would prove maddening to China in a way that is probably not in the national interest of the United States, but the foundational aspects that the communiques have had on all interactions with China would need to become much less instrumental.

Second, along with deemphasizing the tenets of the three joint communiques, the United States should revert away from its One-China policy. Instead, the United States would formally adopt its de facto policy regarding China and Taiwan, something along the lines of one China, one Taiwan. Much like a formal denouncement of the communiques, this too would prove extremely maddening to the Chinese position to an extent that may provoke or accelerate conflict between China and Taiwan.

Third, the TRA should become/remain the domineering policy emphasis toward the United States' relations with Taiwan and China.²²⁵ This legislation favors the democratic will of the people of Taiwan through compelling the United States government to provide for or otherwise ensure that Taiwan can maintain a formidable defense against Chinese coercion.²²⁶ Emphasis toward Taiwan could be further bolstered through recognition of Taiwan as a de facto state,²²⁷ defining the United States' intentions toward Taiwan in unambiguous terms,²²⁸ or even a formal recognition of Taiwan independence (should it be declared) as a way to keep the Chinese Communist Party off-balance.²²⁹ Shelly Rigger recently argued that adopting these stances would be overly provoking to China, and

²²⁵ Bolton, "Revisit the 'One-China Policy.'"

²²⁶ Zablocki, "Actions - H.R.2479 - 96th Congress (1979-1980)."

²²⁷ Ted Yoho, "Recognize Taiwan as the Country It Truly Is," *Taipei Times*, December 11, 2018, sec. Editorials, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2018/12/11/2003705885>.

²²⁸ Michael Mazza, "Moving Towards 'Normalcy' in US-Taiwan Relations and Beijing's Response to Bolton-Lee Meeting," *Global Taiwan Brief* 4, no. 11 (June 5, 2019), <http://globaltaiwan.org/2019/06/vol-4,-issue-11/#MichaelMazza06052019>.

²²⁹ Brandon J. Weichert, "To Beat China, Recognize Taiwan," Center for American Greatness, June 10, 2019, <https://amgreatness.com/2019/06/10/to-beat-china-recognize-taiwan/>.

therefore should be avoided.²³⁰ Much like the implementation tenets listed above, a revised TRA would likely garner an extreme amount of Chinese anger, thereby placing Taiwan in an increased amount of danger. For this reason, a formal adoption of a doubling down strategy would most likely simply seek to increase the emphasis that the TRA has towards United States relations with both China and Taiwan, rather than attempting to bolster beyond what the TRA already permits.

Fourth, a doubling-down of commitments toward Taiwan would necessarily include an increase in the quality and quantity of arms sales to Taiwan.²³¹ The TRA currently permits arms sales that are defensive in nature;²³² rather than revise the TRA language to allow for the sale of offensive weapons, the vague differences in determination of what constitutes an offensive weapon from a defensive weapon would be leveraged to permit arms sales of increased capabilities.²³³ Much as the TRA directs the sale of weapons to Taiwan so long as Chinese military expenditures reflect offensive capabilities, the vagueness that differentiates offensive from defensive Chinese capabilities could pave the way for offensive arms sales to Taiwan. Increases in the quality and quantity of defensive/offensive weaponry would be agitating to China; however, they would likely be viewed as more palatable than the three implementational steps listed above.

Fifth, John Bolton has advocated for the re-stationing of United States military personnel to Taiwan, suggesting that this would be permitted in the current legislation contained in the TRA.²³⁴ Though on the surface this argument may appear to be favorable

²³⁰ Shelley Rigger, “The Taiwan Relations Act: Past, Present, Future,” *Asia Policy* 26, no. 4 (November 15, 2019): 11–17, <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2019.0061>.

²³¹ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 33–36.

²³² Zablocki, “Actions - H.R.2479 - 96th Congress (1979-1980).”

²³³ Michael R. Pompeo, “Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo on The Story With Martha MacCallum of FOX News,” FOX News, August 19, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-state-michael-r-pompeo-on-the-story-with-martha-maccallum-of-fox-news/>.

²³⁴ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

to Taiwan, the rationale of the argument is actually PRC focused:²³⁵ “Taiwan’s geographic location is closer to East Asia’s mainland and the South China Sea than either Okinawa or Guam, giving U.S. forces greater flexibility for rapid deployment throughout the region should the need arise.”²³⁶ Any decision to reposition the United States military to Taiwan would prove extremely maddening to China, and despite the rhetoric provided by Bolton, would not actually be advocated by most scholars and policy advocates in favor of doubling-down on commitments toward Taiwan.

All five of these implementational steps would vehemently confront China in a struggle for great power competition, especially if taken in concert with one another. Most likely, they would not serve to improve the security of a democratic Taiwan, instead unnecessarily raising the stakes in ways that actually result in decreases in Taiwan’s security.

2. Light Doubling-Down Option

A potentially more practical policy adoption would address many of the same implementation steps noted above; however, it would seek to succeed in a way that is far less provocative. This light doubling-down policy option would consist of three key implementation tenets.

First, the United States should avoid a public display of provocation in its attempts to deemphasize the three joint communiques. Along with this, the United States would need to maintain its One-China policy. These necessary concessions to China enable the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to maintain a domestic narrative that prevents an erosion of its legitimacy.²³⁷ Though these concessions are not ideal to the United States national interest, they are required to control the level of provocativeness that is inherent in the TRA.

²³⁵ Rigger, “The Taiwan Relations Act,” 14–15.

²³⁶ Bolton, “Revisit the ‘One-China Policy.’”

²³⁷ Richard C. Bush, *Uncharted Strait: The Future of China-Taiwan Relations* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 27–30.

Second, the TRA shall remain the primary emphasis of the United States' relations with Taiwan. The legislation as originally crafted continues to receive near unanimous approval in both the House and Senate; though the proposed legislation contained in the Taiwan Assurances Act of 2019 seeks to bolster the United States commitments toward Taiwan, it is preponderantly a reaffirmation of the same commitments contained within the TRA.²³⁸ Rather than adopt a new piece of legislation that could be perceived as provocative, the Taiwan Assurances Act of 2019 should be removed from the legislative agenda. Instead, the United States should continue to adhere to the already existent law as written in the TRA. Congress can continue to reaffirm their commitments to the TRA through their annual vote to extend the measure.²³⁹

Third, just like the extreme doubling-down option, the light option would also seek to bolster the quality and quantity of arms sales to Taiwan.²⁴⁰ Though arms sales to Taiwan have always been perceived as provocative by China, the United States shall continue to sell armaments to Taiwan that reflect the threat posed by China, as it is perceived by Taiwan. Importantly to the United States, this weaponry should be primarily defensive in nature, such as radar and sonar for detection, and anti-air and anti-ship missiles to deter attack. Other more offensively focused weapon systems sales of fighter jets and tanks shall only be permitted when a definitive defense use case is warranted.

All three of these implementational steps would confront China in a struggle for great power competition but do so in a much less provocative way than discussed in the extreme policy option. In both cases, a confrontational strategy could prove advantageous (and disadvantageous if war provoking) to the positions of the United States and Taiwan, some of which will be explored next.

²³⁸ Michael T. McCaul, "H.R.2002 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Taiwan Assurance Act of 2019," Congress.gov, May 8, 2019, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2002>.

²³⁹ Zengerle, "U.S. House Passes pro-Taiwan Bills, Amid Trade Tensions with China."

²⁴⁰ Tucker and Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?," 33–36.

D. ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

Adopting a confrontational strategy toward China that doubles-down on United States commitments offers quite compelling advantages, even if only some of the implementational steps listed above are adopted. However, key disadvantages to all the implementation steps are the provoking effects that they will undoubtedly have toward China. Though China may not be the behemoth superpower often characterized, its rise cannot be neglected altogether, and so careful attention to avoid overly provocative policies must be at the center of any policy altering decision. The following section will discuss three of the key advantages and disadvantages inherent to a confrontational policy that reinforces the current United States' commitments toward Taiwan.

1. Advantages

First, United States' efforts to bolster the military capabilities of Taiwan confront China on its primary territorial dispute.²⁴¹ Though bolstered commitments might be advertised to the international community as being conducted to protect the thriving democracy of Taiwan, more importantly from a great power competition perspective, is the United States' projection of strength and confidence in its position as the primary regional influencer.²⁴² Recognizing that China has not achieved economic and military power parity with the United States, this projection of strength signals that the United States does not view China as a peer great power actor. To be sure, additional commitments toward Taiwan would be highly provocative and maddening to China; however, the lack of economic and military power parity nullifies the fears that China would significantly counteract.²⁴³ Much as Thucydides has taught that the "strong do what they can and the

²⁴¹ Bolton, "Revisit the 'One-China Policy.'"

²⁴² Peter Navarro, "America Can't Dump Taiwan," *The National Interest*, July 19, 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-cant-dump-taiwan-17040>.

²⁴³ Tucker and Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?," 33–36.

weak suffer what they must,”²⁴⁴ the United States would in effect be telling China that it does not have the regional power necessary to overcome the regional influence of the United States. This advantage would become more apparent through an adoption of the extreme doubling-down policy option, though benefits are also achieved to a lesser extent through a lighter adoption.

Second, by doubling-down on commitments toward Taiwan, the United States would signal its resolve to regional allies.²⁴⁵ In direct opposition to the loss of credibility that might occur with an abandonment strategy, actions to bolster Taiwan would further cement relationships between the United States and its regional alliances, restoring any residual doubt about the United States’ commitment to the Indo-Pacific region.²⁴⁶ Continued and improved confidence in the hub and spoke alliance system throughout the Indo-Pacific region is imperative to preventing the proliferation of destructive arms races, in turn serving as a key facilitator of regional peace. This advantage would become more apparent through an adoption of the extreme doubling-down policy option, though benefits are also achieved to a lesser extent through a lighter adoption.

Third, increasing commitments toward Taiwan would serve to protect its vibrant democracy that has served as a regional and global stalwart for the previous thirty years.²⁴⁷ The increasing predominance of a unique identity in Taiwan²⁴⁸ that is starkly opposed to the authoritarian rule represented by the Chinese Communist Party continues to strengthen, evident most recently by the landslide reelection of President Tsai Ing-wen in January

²⁴⁴ Thucydides et al., *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).

²⁴⁵ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 32–36.

²⁴⁶ Navarro, “America Can’t Dump Taiwan.”

²⁴⁷ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 34.

²⁴⁸ Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Taiwanese / Chinese Identity (1992/06~2019/06).”

2020.²⁴⁹ Through the strengthening of United States commitments toward Taiwan, the United States is better able to ensure that the future of Taiwan is determined by and has “the assent of the people of Taiwan.”²⁵⁰ By increasing commitments toward Taiwan, the United States is able to project the value that it places on democracy and the will of the people, both in Taiwan and globally. This advantage could be achieved through an adoption of either the extreme or light doubling-down policy option.

2. Disadvantages

First and foremost, implementing a policy that serves to reinforce the United States commitments to Taiwan will deeply anger China.²⁵¹ Taiwan has been instrumental to the Chinese position, evident in each of the joint communiques, and it appears unlikely that China will reverse on this position in light of a bolstered Taiwan.²⁵² If the implementational steps were taken in entirety (particularly a renouncing of the joint communiques; adopting a one China, one Taiwan policy; or re-stationing of United States’ military personnel in Taiwan), they would probably be deemed overly provocative and unacceptable to China. Even if the United States was successful in implementing this policy, the very act would also serve to increase the stakes, especially when considering that differences concerning the future of Taiwan represent one of the only flashpoints that could rapidly escalate to nuclear conflict between the United States and China.²⁵³ This disadvantage would be much more apparent through an adoption of the extreme doubling-down option. A careful adoption of the light doubling-down strategy may avoid this disadvantage beyond what is currently present in the relations between the United States and China.

²⁴⁹ Yimou Lee and Meg Shen, “Taiwan President Wins Landslide Victory in Stark Rebuke to China,” Reuters, January 11, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-election-idUSKBN1ZA009>.

²⁵⁰ Clinton, “Full Text of Clinton’s Speech on China Trade Bill.”

²⁵¹ Rigger, “The Taiwan Relations Act.”

²⁵² Buckley and Horton, “Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option.”

²⁵³ Tucker and Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?,” 23.

Second, China will increasingly feel that they are not respected on the world stage as a global power, thereby creating and deepening any resentment toward the current international order.²⁵⁴ Though certainly not amidst or even approaching the necessary parameters for a power transition, accounting for Chinese satisfaction remains paramount to future global peace.²⁵⁵ Until the time (if ever) that China exceeds economic and military power parity, this dissatisfaction will be exerted through increased defiance of United States' desires in global institutions. Particularly, the United States will find it increasingly difficult to gain consensus among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council on important issues such as the denuclearization of North Korea and Iran. This disadvantage would be much more apparent through an adoption of the extreme doubling-down option. A careful adoption of the light doubling-down strategy may avoid this disadvantage beyond what is currently present in the relations between the United States and China.

Third, a direct confrontation over the future of Taiwan, more so than any other dispute between the United States and China, could rapidly transform great power competition to great power conflict.²⁵⁶ A large part of the legitimizing narrative for the CCP is centered around righting the wrongs that were imposed upon China during its century of humiliation.²⁵⁷ To this point, a restoration of territories over which China perceives to have previously had sovereignty is an imperative, Taiwan being the premier example.²⁵⁸ If reunification becomes overly preclusive, the CCP may feel compelled to act in order to prevent a significant diminishment of its domestic legitimacy.²⁵⁹ In short,

²⁵⁴ Alastair Iain Johnston, "China in a World of Orders: Rethinking Compliance and Challenge in Beijing's International Relations," *International Security* 44, no. 2 (October 2019): 9–60, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00360.

²⁵⁵ Tammen and Kugler, "Power Transition and China–US Conflicts," 46–50.

²⁵⁶ Lampton, *Following the Leader*, 165–68.

²⁵⁷ Xi Jinping, *Xi Jinping, the Governance of China*, First edition (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014).

²⁵⁸ Tammen and Kugler, "Power Transition and China–US Conflicts," 46–47.

²⁵⁹ Bush, *Uncharted Strait*, 27–30.

the danger presented by adopting this policy option is due to an uncertainty of a response by the CCP, either because the future of Taiwan is in fact within the national interest of China as discussed in the first disadvantage, or because the CCP is in effect coerced to respond in attempts to maintain its domestic legitimacy.²⁶⁰ This disadvantage is possible if either the extreme or light doubling-down policy option is adopted, though is certainly more likely with an adoption of the extreme option.

E. CONCLUSION

The return to an era of great power competition, along with upholding democratic values throughout the globe, lead some scholars and policy experts to conclude that the United States must double-down on its efforts and commitments toward Taiwan. Though the argument to confront China in this regard, particularly in terms of protecting a vibrant democracy, have very persuasive and well-intentioned merits, the resulting risk and danger of adopting this type of policy is overwhelming. The CCP has not wavered from the propagandistic rhetoric that the reunification of Taiwan is one of its core interests, and as a result, this has since been a key contributor to the CCP's narrative for legitimacy.²⁶¹ For this reason, an adoption of this policy option would be overly provocative, thereby actually increasing the danger and risk for catastrophic conflict—a direct contradiction to the supporting arguments for an increase in commitments to Taiwan. As such, the necessity of adopting a strategy that doubles-down on United States' commitments toward Taiwan appears unwarranted. Instead, the next chapter will present the argument that a maintenance of the status quo, despite pleasing none of the interested parties, remains in the long-term national interest of the United States (and China and Taiwan).

²⁶⁰ Bush, 27–30.

²⁶¹ Bush, 27–30.

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V. STATUS QUO: ANYTHING ELSE IS SIMPLY TOO UNPREDICTABLE AND DANGEROUS

A. INTRODUCTION

Scholars and policy experts recommending a maintenance of the status quo generally draw this conclusion because adopting anything different is as unpredictable as it is potentially dangerous.²⁶² The language contained in the three joint communiques has proved satisficing to China, while the seeming contradictions in the Six Assurances to Taiwan and Taiwan Relations Act have satisficed Taiwan.²⁶³ Similarly, China disapproves of the Six Assurances to Taiwan and the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA),²⁶⁴ while Taiwan is dissatisfied with the commitments contained in the three joint communiques.²⁶⁵ Despite the contradictions and displeasures, the resulting effects of deterrence and assurance for both China and Taiwan respectively, have effectively avoided sparking the most explosive flashpoint in East Asia.²⁶⁶ Through strategic ambiguity regarding United States' preferences and involvement, a relative peace has been maintained even while the United States has established and maintained varying levels of relations with both China and Taiwan. Declaring definitive and resolute favor over one or the other would likely prove either too provoking or enticing for China, exponentially increasing the potential for catastrophic conflict that could quickly escalate to global conflict. For this reason, this thesis concludes that a maintenance of the status quo is the least-worst, and therefore only viable policy option that should guide United States relations with both China and Taiwan. An adoption of an abandonment or double down strategy is unnecessary, provocative, and much more likely to result in catastrophic conflict.

²⁶² Rigger, *Why Giving up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China*, 4–5.

²⁶³ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 3.

²⁶⁴ Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations*, 106–37.

²⁶⁵ Romberg, 49–106.

²⁶⁶ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 22.

The purpose of this chapter will be to further analyze the status quo policy option in order to determine its relative persuasiveness and explanatory power to the other primary policy options. Through analysis, this chapter seeks to answer three primary research questions. First, why have supporting scholars and policy experts concluded that alternative policy options are too dangerous for consideration, and that the maintenance of the status quo is an imperative for the United States, China, and Taiwan? Second, what would be the key implementational tenets of this policy option if applied to the contemporary relationship between the United States and both China and Taiwan respectively? Third, what are the key advantages and disadvantages of adapting this policy option?

To answer these research questions, this chapter will consist of three primary sections of analysis. The first section will analyze the necessity of the status quo as a way of prolonging the relative peace that has endured in East Asia. The second section will elaborate upon the key tenets and continued implementation requirements of a status quo strategy. The third section will list and analyze the key advantages and disadvantages of maintaining the status quo between relations among the United States and both China and Taiwan.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE NECESSITY FOR THE STATUS QUO AS A MEANS OF PROLONGING THE RELATIVE PEACE

The necessity of maintaining the status quo through continued adherence to the United States' policies of One-China and strategic ambiguity becomes simply apparent after having analyzed the two other primary policy options in the previous chapters. Though far from ideal for the United States, China, and Taiwan, all other alternatives are impossibly dangerous.²⁶⁷ An accommodating strategy abandons the democratic ideals that have come to define the United States and the western world. A confrontational strategy that doubles-down on commitments toward Taiwan is overly provocative and will exponentially increase the pressure felt by the Chinese Communist Party to engage in aggressive acts. A change in policy may come to the initial delight of either China (abandon

²⁶⁷ Rigger, *Why Giving up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China*, 1.

Taiwan) or Taiwan (double-down on commitments), but Shelley Rigger contends that “it would create new problems just as intractable as the old ones, but less familiar and therefore potentially even more challenging.”²⁶⁸ In this way, the status quo represents the least bad option, even if equally and not explicitly, deterring and reassuring. However, the status quo is the only option that permits a continuation of the relative peace that exists among the United States, China, and Taiwan.

C. IMPLEMENTATION OF A CONTINUED STATUS QUO STRATEGY

Maintaining the status quo is much more than a continuance of previous policies that have come to define the United States’ One-China policy.²⁶⁹ This particularly rings true in light of the appearance of a policy shift being underway, evident by increased frequency of arms sales to Taiwan,²⁷⁰ deeper (though still necessarily shallow) diplomatic relations and engagements between the United States and Taiwan,²⁷¹ coupled with the ongoing strain in relations between the United States and China. But the question begs whether these changes in relations serve the greater good and the longer-term national interest of the United States and the American people. This section will analyze the merit of recent changes in relations that the United States has had with Taiwan.

First, United States’ arms sales to Taiwan have increased in terms of both quantity and quality during the Trump Administration, more so than during any other previous United States presidential administration.²⁷² Arms sales approvals have become a much more normal, almost regular occurrence, whereas previous administrations had approved

²⁶⁸ Rigger, 4–5.

²⁶⁹ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 23–24.

²⁷⁰ Cary Huang, “Under Trump, U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan Could Be the New Normal,” *South China Morning Post*, August 25, 2019, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3024132/under-trump-us-arms-sales-taiwan-could-be-new-normal>.

²⁷¹ Chabot, “Text - H.R.535 - 115th Congress (2017-2018).”

²⁷² Zorgham, Stone, and Zengerle, “U.S. State Department Approves Possible \$2.2 Billion Arms Sale to Taiwan.”

such sales only periodically.²⁷³ Much as the quantity of approvals have increased, the types of weaponry approved for sale to Taiwan has increased in quality, further blurring the differences between what would be deemed offensive and/or defensive weaponry. The back-to-back arms sales approvals of July and August 2019 permitted the sale of M1A2T Abrams Tanks²⁷⁴ and F-16 Fighter Jets.²⁷⁵ Though these arms sales were approved under the auspice that they are defensive in nature, previous administrations had a high level of apprehension for similar type sales approval, explicitly because sales of tanks and fighter jets would prove particularly provocative to China, thereby having a potential destabilizing effect to the status quo. Contrary to the appearance given by frequent Trump Administration approvals, the potential for destabilization remains very high, and therefore arms sales such as tanks and fighter jets will need to be discontinued to avoid being overly provocative. Instead, arms sales approvals should be more definitively defensive in nature relative to the Chinese threat,²⁷⁶ namely radar and sonar for detection, and anti-air and anti-ship missiles to deter attack. Additionally, defensive arms sales approvals should be bundled so as to control the frequency of approvals. Bundled approvals would decrease the frequency, further limiting the provocation to China.

Second, though diplomatic relations remain necessarily shallow between the United States and Taiwan, the Trump Administration has taken actions that might suggest a desire for deepening of relations. This desire appeared most evident upon Trump's acceptance of a phone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.²⁷⁷ Arms sales of the type and frequency discussed above have led some to conclude an implicit endorsement of President Tsai Ing-wen and the Democratic Progressive Party, particularly because the approvals occurred

²⁷³ Huang, "Under Trump, U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan Could Be the New Normal."

²⁷⁴ Zorgham, Stone, and Zengerle, "U.S. State Department Approves Possible \$2.2 Billion Arms Sale to Taiwan."

²⁷⁵ David Alexander, "State Department Approves Possible \$8 Billion Fighter Jet Sale to Taiwan: Pentagon," Reuters, August 21, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-taiwan-aircraft-idUSKCN1VA29F>.

²⁷⁶ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 24.

²⁷⁷ Hutzler, "Trump's Phone Call with Taiwan President Sparks China Complaint."

during the run-up to the presidential election in Taiwan.²⁷⁸ Additionally, the Taiwan Travel Act of 2018 permits and encourages much higher-level diplomatic dialogue between the United States and Taiwan than had been previously allowed.²⁷⁹ Besides United States Congressional and State Department delegation visits to Taiwan,²⁸⁰ the provisions of the Taiwan Travel Act also permitted President Tsai Ing-wen to use New York City and Denver as in-transit layovers during her travels to the Caribbean.²⁸¹ Furthermore, the House and Senate unanimously supported the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019 before President Trump signed into law on March 26, 2020.²⁸² The TAIPEI Act directs the United States government to “support Taiwan in strengthening its official diplomatic relationships as well as other partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region and around the world.”²⁸³ Despite not yet having reached a point of criticality or Chinese response, the Taiwan Travel Act and the TAIPEI Act permit and encourages potentially overly provocative behavior. As such, extreme caution and apprehension shall be exercised in any additional actions that seek to deepen diplomatic ties between the United States and Taiwan, even if they are permitted and encouraged by United States law.

Third, the Taiwan Assurances Act of 2019 was referred by the United States House of Representatives to the Senate in May of 2019.²⁸⁴ This proposed act was further referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, where it has remained dormant to date. Much more so than proposing an actual change to policy, the language instead seeks to

²⁷⁸ Huang, “Under Trump, U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan Could Be the New Normal.”

²⁷⁹ Chabot, “Text - H.R.535 - 115th Congress (2017-2018).”

²⁸⁰ Aspinwall, “High-Level U.S. Visits to Taiwan Mark 40 Years of Unofficial Ties.”

²⁸¹ Michelle Nichols and Carlo Allegri, “Taiwan President in U.S. after Warning of Threat From ‘Overseas Forces,’” Reuters, July 12, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-idUSKCN1U60J2>.

²⁸² Gardner, “S.1678 - 116th Congress (2019-2020).”

²⁸³ Gardner.

²⁸⁴ McCaul, “H.R.2002 - 116th Congress (2019-2020).”

reaffirm the commitments made to Taiwan as contained in the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances to Taiwan.²⁸⁵ Though the proposed act and reaffirmation to Taiwan is arguably noble, one must ask whether the passage is of necessity, particularly considering a lack of decisively different language from that contained in the Taiwan Relations Act. Rather, the passage into law would instead serve as an unnecessary reminder to China that the United States continues to maintain commitments to Taiwan that contradict the commitments that the United States made to China as contained in the Third Joint Communiqué of 1982.²⁸⁶ As such, this Act is unnecessary and provocative, and so should be removed from the legislative agenda.

Finally, and more generally, it is in the national interest of the United States to continue to promote a peaceful resolution toward the future of Taiwan. To this end, the United States shall adhere to Richard Bush's dos and don'ts as contained in his "A One-China Policy Primer."²⁸⁷ Particularly, the United States should continue to reference "our One-China policy," encourage a peaceful dispute resolution, continue defensive arms sales, and conduct bilateral engagements focused to strengthening deterrence.²⁸⁸ As importantly, the United States shall avoid overly provocative actions or steps, particularly those that present a domestic affront to the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party.²⁸⁹

D. ADVANTAGES / DISADVANTAGES

Maintaining the status quo that is enabled by an adherence to the United States' One-China policy offers very compelling advantages, even if dissatisfying to the United States, China, and Taiwan. The following section will discuss three of the key advantages

²⁸⁵ Michael T. McCaul, "Text - H.R.2002 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Taiwan Assurance Act of 2019," Congress.gov, May 8, 2019, 2019/2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2002/text>.

²⁸⁶ Department of State, *American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1982*.

²⁸⁷ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 23–24.

²⁸⁸ Bush, 23–24.

²⁸⁹ Bush, 24.

and disadvantages inherent to a maintenance of the One-China policy and requisite strategic ambiguity.

1. Advantages

First and foremost, the primary advantage of achieving a maintenance of the status quo is that a relative peace would continue to persist across the Taiwan Strait.²⁹⁰ In fact, this relative peace has been maintained through the careful application of the United States' policies of One-China and strategic ambiguity, dating back to the Shanghai Communiqué and continuing to this date. Despite each presidential administration having adopted more specific tweaks and interpretations to the language contained in each of the three joint communiqués, the TRA, and the Six Assurances to Taiwan, the prevailing tenets of One-China and strategic ambiguity have provided enough reassurance and deterrence to both China and Taiwan.²⁹¹ Though the past policies are in no way guaranteed to prevail, the status quo is in fact the most predictable, least provocative, and safe avenue toward continued peace persisting between the United States and China over their respective international relations with Taiwan.²⁹²

Second, the status quo keeps the United States directly within the dialogue for the future of Taiwan, even if the United States does not have the desire to be a formal arbiter of the final resolution. By maintaining this position, the United States is able to effectively protect the vibrant democracy in Taiwan, while deterring aggression from China.²⁹³ In this way, this position deters both China and Taiwan from unilateral attempts to alter the status quo, while also reassuring both China (even if not explicitly) and Taiwan that their

²⁹⁰ Bush and Romberg, “‘Cross-Strait Moderation and the United States’ – A Response to Robert Sutter.”

²⁹¹ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 22.

²⁹² Rigger, *Why Giving up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China*, 4–5.

²⁹³ Rigger, 8–9.

respective interests will be incorporated into any final resolution toward the future status of Taiwan.²⁹⁴

Third, despite seemingly indecisive, the status quo actually permits many of the primary benefits advocated by scholars and policy experts for both the abandonment and doubling-down strategies, while preventing the drawbacks that might result from either of these policy adoptions. Without being war inducingly provocative, the United States is able to confront China through protecting the democracy in Taiwan,²⁹⁵ while also accommodating China through maintaining an ambiguous position toward the future of Taiwan.²⁹⁶ In fact, controlling the level of provocativeness is the most likely method for avoiding catastrophic confrontation.²⁹⁷ The lower provocation enabled by the status quo permits the Chinese Communist Party to spin the narrative that becomes necessary to maintain its legitimacy among the domestic Chinese population.²⁹⁸ Should the United States adopt the more enticing (to China) abandonment strategy, or the more provocative (again to China) doubling-down strategy, the Chinese Communist Party would likely experience very high levels of pressure to exert its mandate to regain lost territories resulting from its century of humiliation.

2. Disadvantages

First and foremost, though the status quo enables a relative peaceful coexistence, it also enables the persistence of one of the most potentially severe and dangerous military flashpoints.²⁹⁹ Though the issue of the future of Taiwan has been continually tabled by the leaders of the United States, China, and Taiwan, Chinese leaders regularly renew their

²⁹⁴ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 22.

²⁹⁵ Rigger, *Why Giving up Taiwan Will Not Help Us with China*, 8–9.

²⁹⁶ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 22.

²⁹⁷ David M. Lampton, “PBS Frontline Interview with David Lampton,” PBS, October 18, 2001, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/china/interviews/lampton.html>.

²⁹⁸ Lanteigne, *Chinese Foreign Policy*, 49.

²⁹⁹ Lampton, “PBS Frontline Interview with David Lampton.”

commitment to reunite Taiwan with the mainland, even if the cause requires a resort to military action.³⁰⁰ This constant core position of China is one that the Chinese Communist Party feels must be maintained, else risk a decisive loss of legitimacy.³⁰¹ For this reason, China will not budge from its position, and therefore the potential for catastrophic conflict will persist far beyond the foreseeable future.

Second, despite the relative peace enabled by the United States' careful application of its One-China and strategic ambiguity policies, the status quo is dissatisfying to the United States, China, and Taiwan. This dissatisfaction is best represented by the differing arguments presented in this thesis, each seeking a more satisfying solution, albeit also coming at the utter expense of others. The United States has no desire to be in an arbiter position of the final resolution, hence the careful language in each of the joint communiques, the TRA, and the Six Assurances to Taiwan.³⁰² Chinese displeasure is apparent by the continual renewal of its intent to reincorporate Taiwan³⁰³ to mainland rule and the need for the Chinese Communist Party to retain a high level of legitimacy among its domestic populace.³⁰⁴ The people of Taiwan, perhaps suffering the worst as a result of necessary ambiguity in this competition among great powers, are prohibited from fully exerting the self-determination that has enabled the democratic success of its regional neighbors.³⁰⁵ This across the board dissatisfaction is directly responsible for the differing policy debates among scholars and policy experts.

Third, maintaining the status quo gives the appearance that the United States is indecisive, failing to take a stand one way or the other. This appearance enables pundits to

³⁰⁰ Buckley and Horton, "Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option."

³⁰¹ Lampton, "PBS Frontline Interview with David Lampton."

³⁰² Bush, *Uncharted Strait*, 241–43.

³⁰³ Buckley and Horton, "Xi Jinping Warns Taiwan That Unification Is the Goal and Force Is an Option."

³⁰⁴ Lampton, "PBS Frontline Interview with David Lampton."

³⁰⁵ Bush, *Uncharted Strait*, 1–6.

engage in powerful rhetoric that suggests that the United States' failure to act is a mere kicking of the can down the road to a time at which China will have fully risen as a peer great power.³⁰⁶ Despite this appearance of indecisiveness, maintaining policies that enable the status quo, such as those of the previous near half century, are actually a decisive and deliberate position spanning every United States presidential administration, even if the specific application and interpretation has varied.³⁰⁷

E. CONCLUSION

Rigger, Bush, and the late Romberg have continually advocated for a maintenance of the status quo through meticulous adherence to the United States' One-China policy and necessary resultant strategic ambiguity. More than a mere continuance of policies that have enabled a relative peace, the status quo is the only palatable option to the national interest of the United States, and most probably the only option that avoids catastrophic global conflict. For this reason, actions taken by the Trump Administration to increasingly arm Taiwan in terms of frequency and in a blurringly offensive nature, and a deepening of diplomatic relations between the United States and Taiwan, are especially eye watering, even if they appear noble on the surface. The status quo is not the best policy (there is none), but it is the least-worst among bad policy options.

³⁰⁶ Allison, *Destined for War*.

³⁰⁷ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 2–5.

VI. CONCLUSION

The United States' relations with both China and Taiwan have been guided by the three joint communiques, the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), and the Six Assurances to Taiwan.³⁰⁸ Collectively, these documents have come to define the United States' One-China policy, and the requisite strategic ambiguity that has enabled a relative peace. Despite the relative peace, the language in each of these documents was crafted during a very different geostrategic environment, one in which the dominant adversary of the United States was the Soviet Union. China, still reeling from the impacts of the Cultural Revolution, was a mere afterthought in terms of great power politics, though one that could be used as leverage against the Soviet Union.³⁰⁹ Since rapprochement, China has achieved the largest economic expansion in global history, which has enabled it to field a formidable military. The combination of an immensely increased level of economic and military power, along with a drastically differing set of political ideals, has brought upon a return to great power competition.

The profoundly differing geostrategic environment calls into question whether the United States' One-China and strategic ambiguity policies remain the best policy approach to China and Taiwan. Though the One-China policy has enabled a relative peace during the recent near half-century since Nixon's rapprochement, the policy is quite dissatisfying to the United States, China, and Taiwan. For this reason, scholars and policy experts have engaged in debate regarding the policy approach that the United States should adopt toward its relations with China and Taiwan. This thesis has analyzed three of these primary arguments, namely accommodation through abandonment, confrontation through doubling-down, and a maintenance of the status quo.

Former Ambassador Chas Freeman leads a prominent field of scholars, including Charles Glaser and Graham Allison, who suggest that the United States' commitments toward Taiwan have a poisoning effect to the more important geostrategic relationship

³⁰⁸ Bush, 3.

³⁰⁹ Mann, *About Face*, 13–14.

between the United States and China. Taiwan armament efforts directly contradict the commitments that the United States had made to China in the Third Joint Communiqué of 1982, further prolonging the future that may have been initially envisioned by Nixon and Mao during rapprochement. Though Freeman, Glaser, and Allison would rather Taiwan not be sacrificed, their realism based view of the power transition theory suggests that dominant existing powers must permit room for expansion of the rising power, else risk a struggle for regional hegemony based upon the rising power achieving or exceeding power parity.³¹⁰ Analysis provided by this thesis concludes that despite the strong rhetoric of China having achieved peer status with the United States, China is not actually approaching economic and military power parity with the United States. Rather, the cumulative effects of long-term high levels of GDP and defense expenditures continue to place the United States in a category of its own, a condition that Michael Beckley contends will remain unrivaled very far into the foreseeable future.³¹¹ Given the disparate power parity differential between the United States and China, this thesis concludes that an abandonment of commitments toward Taiwan is unnecessary, even if continued commitments toward Taiwan prove maddening to China. Beyond being unnecessarily warranted and premature, an adoption of an abandonment strategy would have direct implications toward the United States' ability to maintain credibility in its alliances with states throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

Former Ambassador and National Security Advisor John Bolton, Bonnie Glaser, and the late Nancy Bernkopf Tucker have argued that the United States should confront the aspiring China, namely in China's efforts to undermine the vibrant democracy in Taiwan. The TRA and the Six Assurances to Taiwan better reflect the ideals of not only the United States, but also the western world, and so these documents should take precedence in any relationship that the United States has with both China and Taiwan. To this end, Bolton, Glaser, and Tucker argue that the United States should increase its efforts

³¹⁰ Tammen and Kugler, "Power Transition and China-US Conflicts," 45-46.

³¹¹ Michael Beckley, *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World's Sole Superpower*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

to arm and protect the democratic Taiwan. Though less explicit, the Trump Administration has adopted policies that seem to favor Taiwan, namely more frequent and offensively capable military arms sales agreements³¹² and deeper diplomatic engagement through passage into law of the Taiwan Travel Act³¹³ and the Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019.³¹⁴ More explicitly, President Trump, as of this writing, has caused deep consternation among all advocates of the One-China policy through his acceptance of a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen.³¹⁵ Even if this was simply a diplomatic gaffe that contains no further meaning, it quickly brought into question the continued viability of the One-China policy under the newly ascended Trump Administration. Through analysis of this policy option, this thesis concludes that each of the necessary steps to adopt a formal policy that favors Taiwan will be extremely provocative and maddening to China. Furthermore, the lack of economic and military parity between the United States and China, along with Taiwan's already formidable ability to defend against Chinese attack as professed by Michael Beckley,³¹⁶ renders this policy option unnecessary, even if many of the tenets appear to uphold and promote the exemplary democratic Taiwan.

The final policy option analyzed throughout this thesis recommends a maintenance of the status quo in international relations that the United States has with China and Taiwan. Shelley Rigger, Richard Bush, and the late Alan Romberg advocate that the United States' strict and meticulous adherence to its One-China policy has not only maintained a relative peace throughout the previous near half-century, but also is the only policy option that will maintain this relative peace in the future. Though far from ideal, the status quo is the only policy option that is congruent with the long-term national interest of the United States

³¹² Huang, "Under Trump, U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan Could Be the New Normal."

³¹³ Chabot, "Text - H.R.535 - 115th Congress (2017-2018)."

³¹⁴ Gardner, "S.1678 - 116th Congress (2019-2020)."

³¹⁵ Hutzler, "Trump's Phone Call with Taiwan President Sparks China Complaint."

³¹⁶ Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia," 83-95.

(and consequently, China and Taiwan). For these reasons, Richard Bush became deeply alarmed by Trump's acceptance of Tsai's congratulatory phone call,³¹⁷ and further so by President Trump's reticent walk back of this position, informing Chinese President Xi Jinping that the United States would "honor our 'one China' policy."³¹⁸ Much like the conclusion drawn by Rigger, Bush, and Romberg, this thesis concludes that the maintenance of the status quo is the least bad of other worse options. Despite the appearance of indecisiveness, a decision by the United States to adhere by its One-China policy and the requisite strategic ambiguity is rather a deliberate and decisive attempt to promote and maintain the relative peace that has persisted among the United States, China, and Taiwan.

Given this conclusion, the appearance of a shift in policy toward Taiwan by the Trump Administration becomes even more alarming. First, the more frequent and offensive quality of recent arms sales authorization to Taiwan most probably exceeds the necessity, given Taiwan's already formidable defense capabilities, especially considering the geography of Taiwan is far favorable to the defender against power projection. As such, this thesis would characterize the increase in frequency and quality of arms sales as a confrontation to China through a doubling down of commitments toward Taiwan. Second, the Taiwan Allies International Protection Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act clearly states its favorability toward Taiwan, demonstrated through the encouragement of the international community to increase diplomatic ties with Taiwan, to include the inclusion of Taiwan in international organizations that it is currently prohibited from participation. Though the TAIPEI Act appears perfectly reasonable on the surface, it indirectly contradicts the tenets of the United States' One-China policy, and therefore this thesis would characterize the TAIPEI Act as a confrontation to China through a doubling down of commitments toward Taiwan. Finally, the much higher level of diplomatic exchanges enabled by the Taiwan Travel Act also serve to confront China through a doubling-down of commitments toward China.

³¹⁷ Bush, "An Open Letter to Donald Trump on the One-China Policy."

³¹⁸ "Readout of the President's Call with President Xi Jinping of China."

Instead, the Trump Administration and Congressional leadership would be wise to work within the constraints of the legislation and joint agreements that have defined the United States' One-China policy for the better part of the recent half-century. First, continual reaffirmation that the United States has an enduring interest in the peaceful resolution of the future status of Taiwan that fully accounts for the will of the democratic people of Taiwan.³¹⁹ Second, future arms sales agreements should be less frequent, threat-based, and more definitively defensive in nature.³²⁰ Threat-based defensive weaponry that would increase the already formidable defensive perimeter enabled by the geography of Taiwan shall be the primary basis for consideration. Finally, the United States should continue to support efforts by Taiwan to maintain its few remaining diplomatic ties, however, do so in a way that is not overtly provocative to China in a way that may undermine its ability to maintain domestic legitimacy.³²¹ By carefully treading the middle ground between a full implementation of either abandonment or confrontation, the United States will be best postured to maintain the relative peace in a way that is more unlikely to ignite the spark to catastrophic conflict.

The United States' policies of One-China and strategic ambiguity have served the national interest for a near half-century and continue to be the most viable path toward ensuring a relative peace among the United States, China, and Taiwan. Even as China continues its unprecedented economic and military expansion, the impasse between the United States and China regarding the future status of Taiwan also continues to widen. A final resolution appears exceedingly out of reach, barring a catastrophic global conflict that could easily escalate beyond conventional arms. Though the status quo is far from satisfying for the United States, China, and Taiwan, the shared distribution of dissatisfaction has had, and will continue to have the greatest potential for stability across the Taiwan Strait. Put simply, any alternative is impossibly dangerous.

³¹⁹ Bush, *A One-China Policy Primer*, 24.

³²⁰ Bush, 24.

³²¹ Bush, 24.

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