

RESEARCH NOTE

**PELOSI'S INTOXICATION OF TAIWAN AND DEMOCRAT'S FLOPPED
PERFORMANCE IN THE US MIDTERM ELECTION © Σ**

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ABSTRACT

Although traditionally, flopped performance of the Democrats in the US mid-term elections and Pelosi's failure to retain the majority of the house is expected, many analysts do not rule out the possibility of an increased significant connection between the development between the US election and events in the international politics. Therefore, it is highly likely for Taiwan to consider foreign policy options without US security protection in the face of China's threat under President Xi Jinping's third term is inevitable. This brief commentary provides views to answer some of the following questions: What is the most important international security lesson since the incident of Nancy Pelosi's visit as the former Leader of the United States (US) Congress to Taiwan last August 2022? How does the increasing tension in relations between Beijing and Washington foreshadow Taiwan's security future as it becomes increasingly dark and uncertain from the possible invasion of Mainland China?

Keywords: Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, Democrat's flopped performance in the midterm election of the US Congress, Sino-US open rivalry, Taiwan Strait conflict, increased militarisation of China in crisis with Taiwan.

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Σ **Article info:** Submission date: 7 April 2022; Acceptance date: 25 September 2022; Publication date: 31 December 2022.

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NOTA PENYELIDIKAN
**KHAYALAN PELOSI DI TAIWAN DAN KEMEROSOTAN PRESTASI
DEMOKRAT DALAM PILIHANRAYA PENGGAL PERTENGAHAN
KONGRES AMERIKA SYARIKA**

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ABSTRAK

Walaupun secara tradisinya, kemerosotan prestasi parti Demokrat dalam pilihanraya pertengahan penggal dan kegagalan Pelosi mengekalkan pemimpin majoriti Dewan Kongres AS sudah dijangka, ramai penganalisis tidak menolak kemungkinan perkaitan yang semakin ketara antara perkembangan politik domestik dan antarabangsa AS selaku antara perlaku terpenting dalam politik dunia. Komentor ringkas ini mengemukakan pandangan bagi menjawab beberapa persoalan berikut. Apakah pengajaran keselamatan antarangsa terpenting semenjak insiden lawatan Nancy Pelosi selaku Mantan Pemimpin Kongres Amerika Syarika (AS) ke Taiwan pada Ogos 2022 ysnng lalu? Bagaimana peningkatan ketegangan hubungan semasa Beijing dan Washington membayangkan masa depan keselamatan semasa Taiwan semakin kelim dan tidak terjamin daripada kemungkinan penaklukan Tanah Besar China? Oleh yang demikian, kemungkinan tinggi Taiwan untuk memperdebatkan pilihan dasar luar tanpa perlindungan keselamatan AS dan demi menjamin kelangsungan negara itu dalam berhadapan ancaman China di bawah penggal ketiga Presiden Xi Jinping adalah suatu yang tidak dapat dielakkan lagi.

Kata Kunci: *lawatan Pelosi ke Taiwan, hubungkait prestasi buruk Demokrat dalam pilihanraya Kongres AS dengan lawatan Pelosi, persaingan terbuka AS-China, konflik Selat Taiwan, peningkatan proses militerasasi China dalam krisis dengan Taiwan.*

Introduction

In response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan on August 3, 2022, the Chinese military is conducting military operations from August 4 - 6 around Taiwan. Two Chinese aircraft carriers and warships are near, or in, the Taiwan Straits, and fighter aircraft are regularly violating Taiwan's air defence identification zone in batches of 15 or more aircraft. The question is, how does China expect this to play out? What might happen if the People's Republic of China (PRC) decides to unify Taiwan militarily, and does Xi Jinping has the political will to do it?

Technically speaking, this is the fourth Taiwan Strait crisis; the first was in 1955 when China seized Yijiangshan Islands, forcing Taiwan to abandon the Tachen Islands. The second was in 1958 when China shelled Kinmen and Matsu Islands, but the US intervened. The third was in 1995-96, when massive Chinese military exercises were meant to signal China's displeasure at the visit of Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui to the United States. Oceans are considered "vital" to human life, providing food, security, income, and routes for "global trade". In addition, oceans are used for many economic activities, such as tourism, maritime transport, and fishing. There are over 300 million jobs associated with oceans: international trade in marine products, such as fish, generates nearly \$102 billion annually, in addition to roughly \$9 billion in ecotourism (Attri, 2016). Therefore, policymakers, diplomats, academia, and leaders must re-evaluate how we see the seas, oceans, marine resources, and international diplomacy. Diplomacy allows for the cooperation between states and other international actors since oceans are vast and do not recognise international territorial or sovereign borders; therefore, cooperation is essential for the peaceful success of the Blue Economy (Childs & Hicks, 2019; Doyle, 2018; Llewellyn et al., 2016).

Moreover, world politics is about bargaining and alliances with diplomacy as a critical mechanism in the "pursuit of national interest through direct communication, intelligence gathering and manipulation" (Hutchings & Suri, 2020). Therefore, in foreign policy, diplomacy is defined as "an instrument, sometimes used with economic or military force, to allow an international actor to achieve its policy goals". This method has been "refined, institutionalised, and professionalised" throughout the years (Baylis et al., 2017).

So, what is Different Between 1995-96 and Today?

On July 18, 1995, Beijing announced that missile tests would be conducted targeting an area some 90 miles off the coast of northern Taiwan, including DF-15 ballistic missiles. This time, however, the exercises are being held much closer. Of the six exercise areas announced by China, some protrude into Taiwan's 24-nautical-mile adjacent area and territorial waters.

In 1995, after a five-day warning, Chinese naval vessels and aircraft conducted ten days of live-fire tests on the mainland coast opposite Taiwan. Further military exercises were conducted in mid-November to the south of the straits, including joint operations involving air, land, and forces. In 2022, however, reports state that Chinese Landing Crafts in Fujian (the province facing Taiwan) are being loaded with military vehicles and tanks, indicating preparations for an amphibious landing. More than 100 sorties of military aircraft have conducted combat training exercises such as joint reconnaissance, aerial refuelling, airspace control, and strikes on ground targets. Over ten destroyers and frigates from the navy are conducting blockade operations in waters off Taiwan Island. In short, all three arms - amphibious land forces, air, and sea- are mobilised simultaneously.

This time, the intensity of the military drills has broken all previous records, and the situation in the Taiwan Strait is agitated. Drawing parallels from the Russo-Ukraine war, where exercises turned into actual combat, what if the Chinese decide to escalate the situation? An all-out integrated attack cannot be ruled out, but this is not a viable option for China in the immediate future, given the possibility of US and Japanese intervention. The significant risk here is not Taiwanese resistance but a war between the great powers.

This is precisely why a more likely scenario will be long strangulation. With current forces, China can blockade Taiwan, crippling its economy, and ultimately leading to actual war should Taiwan choose to end the blockade. The second option is a limited military offensive by China to capture the outlying islands of Kinmen, Matsu, and Taiping, which are much closer to China than they are to Taiwan. Again, this would require a massive risk in assuming this will be allowed without interference from the US and Japanese navies. Either option would impose high economic & psychological costs on Taiwanese citizens. In both scenarios, the Taiwanese government will have to use its military. While the balance of forces is overwhelmingly in China's favour, this does not account for training, morale, and technological sophistication, as well as Taiwan's ability to execute asymmetric tactics.

Table 1: Comparison of Military Capability between China and Taiwan

Total Active forces	China	Taiwan
Ground Forces	2,035,00	169000
Navy	Hina and Taiwan965000	94000
Air Force	260000	40000
Reserves	510000	1657000
Tanks	5400	650
Aircrafts	3227+	504+
Submarines	59	4
Naval Ships	86	26
Artillery	9834+	2093

Source: Compiled by the Author from multiple sources.

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If any of these scenarios eventuate, Taiwan will have little choice but to accede to some Chinese demands to minimise the possibility of a limited war.

The question remains does Chinese President Xi have the political will? The domestic situation in China could be more favourable to the current Chinese establishment. Due to the removal of the term limit for the apex posts in the Party and the mishandling of Coronavirus added to a depleting economy, President Xi Jinping faced criticism within the Party, and several reputed Chinese citizens like Prof. Xu Zhangrun of Tsinghua University has been blunt and direct in their criticism of the president and his policies. Nevertheless, President Xi has extended his control of all arms of the Chinese system and has initiated a campaign to rekindle popular nationalism (including the study of Party history) to overcome his past setbacks. More than anything, such moves have made the fissures within the Party more obvious and

Xi would not want an armed conflict by launching a military attack on Taiwan under such a precarious domestic scenario. Nevertheless, conversely, if he perceives the domestic situation as too precarious and believes he is running out of options for diversion, he may choose military action. One gauge of this can be watching his actions before the 20th Party Congress or immediately after its conclusion in October 2022. In addition, a publicity-based image-building exercise by Xi could indicate a reduced need for military action. For now, the situation will remain tense for a few months until the domestic situation in China becomes clearer when China decides to move.

Acknowledgement and Declaration

The Author would like to show their gratitude to SINERGI's anonymous reviewers and their constructive feedback in improving the quality of the manuscript. There are also immensely grateful for their comments on earlier versions of the draft. No potential conflict of interest was reported. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

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