**China and Taiwan**

On **Aug 24, 2022** [Noor Humair](https://nation.com.pk/authorpost/columnist/noor-humair/)

Earlier this month, on a local news channel in China, footage of Chinese air force jets taking off in a military exercise near Taiwan was broadcasted on local news channels in Beijing. For the first time in history, Chinese missiles were hurled in the sky across the de facto median line, into Taiwanese territory hinting that the Taiwan strait is no longer a part of international waters as China made clear. China’s targets for Taiwan span more than just geographical controls, stretching to cultural, political, social, economic, as well as strategic ones. China claims that since a great majority of the population of Taiwan is ethnically Chinese, China owns a right to unify the land with the mainland. Both the nations share a common heritage as well, which furthers China’s claim of being in national proximity to Taiwan.
China asserts that even historically, Taiwan has been a part of it since the Ming and Qing Dynasty, (the last imperial dynasty of China) a claim that is turned down by the West. Strategically, China has the most invested interests in the island as control over Taiwan could provide China a larger outreach into the Western Pacific Ocean for both military as well as economic purposes. Taiwan could also potentially provide China with easy access to the major shipping routes of Asia thus fortifying the latter country economically in the region. Taiwan, despite its minimal geographical size, is an economic might with a staggering GDP of 790 Billion U.S dollars, vibrant local industries as well as a robust foreign trade, all of which greatly supplement the economy of China. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Taiwan is to China what India was to the British; the golden sparrow.
Owing to all the aforementioned factors, China has set up a vision for Taiwan under which the former would not only continue the military surveillance of the island but also station troops in the Taiwanese territory to impose a political and administrative setup that would keep the island in China’s subservience. According to China, the pending peaceful reunification of Taiwan with mainland China and the implementation of the ‘One country, two systems, similar to that of Hong Kong would not only enable Taiwan to exercise national sovereignty as a special administrative region of China but also protect the Island from the ‘Foreign powers’ which relentlessly aim at fortifying Taiwan as an autonomous democracy to weaken China’s influence in the region.
The white paper, released recently by China’s government, reads “National reunification is the only way to avoid the risk of Taiwan being invaded and occupied again by foreign countries, to foil the attempts of external forces to contain China, and to safeguard the sovereignty, security, and development interests of our country.” It later stipulates that “Taiwan’s social system and its way of life will be fully respected, and the private property, religious beliefs, and lawful rights and interests of the people in Taiwan will be fully protected” but “Provided that China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests are guaranteed.” This is to say that the respect for Taiwan’s way of life is subject to China’s national and political interests. This political subordination of Taiwan is a key tenet of the reunification agenda that is being promulgated by China.
What further adds to the differences between China and Taiwan is China’s lack of support for engaging in peace talks with the Island, unless these talks enforce the 1992 consensus and the one-China principle, a condition vividly turned down by president Tsai Ing-Wen of Taiwan. Furthermore, the whopping electoral victory of president Tsai in the 2020 elections indicates what the majority of the population of Taiwan wants for the Island’s future.
While the visit of Nancy Pelosi, the U.S house of representatives speaker to Taiwan earlier this month has revved up the military exercise of China in Taiwan, far beyond the announced end date, it seems apparent that China no longer caters to any foreign intervention in the issue as the white paper clearly states that the U.S is “using Taiwan to contain China” and “undermine China’s development and progress” and that DPP’s “moves to separate Taiwan from China represent the serious crime of secession.”