

## Enabling “Patriots” to Be Masters of the Island: Evolution of Xi’s Policy on Taiwan Since 2013

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This article examines the evolution of China’s Taiwan policy under Xi Jinping. It argues that there have been four key shifts since 2013. First, China expanded the definition of Taiwan independence and defined what Beijing viewed as the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. This provided the basis for Beijing to respond to more perceived Taiwan and U.S. “transgressions” and China views both Taipei and Washington as “revisionist” and changing the status quo. Second, Xi established a bidirectional linkage between national rejuvenation and unification with Taiwan and Beijing aims to achieve both goals simultaneously. This means that China will seek progress on unification and has established a soft benchmark to accomplish it by 2049. Third, Xi has pushed to develop a more specific “two systems” solution for Taiwan that will allow Beijing to impose its control over the island and ensure that unification with Taiwan avoids the pains Beijing experienced in Hong Kong. It is unlikely that Taiwan can maintain its democracy post-unification and Beijing will ensure that Chinese “patriots” rule the island. Finally, China has escalated and increased coercion across-the-board against Taiwan, leveraging its growing political, economic, and military power to attempt to shape cross-Strait dynamics in its favor. These changes in PRC policy have not produced the desired results and Taipei has push backed against Chinese activities and rejected China’s ‘solutions’ for Taiwan. Although Beijing has not given up hopes of peaceful unification and would prefer to never have to invade the island, Beijing is likely to continue its bolder, less flexible, more unilateral, and more coercive approach towards Taiwan. Moving forward, the risk of tensions and instabilities in the Taiwan Strait will likely increase.

As China gears up for its 20th Party Congress this fall, there is speculation that President Xi Jinping may unveil important changes to China’s Taiwan policy at that time (or in the spring of 2023), including details about China’s overall policy guidance on how to resolve the Taiwan question in the “new era.”<sup>1</sup> In order to assess how Beijing may modify its approach, it is important to understand the direction Xi has taken for Taiwan since he assumed leadership of China in 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> Miao Zonghan, “中共二十大或提新时代 解决台湾问题总体方略 分析：两岸模糊性逐” (The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China May Bring a New Era to the Overall Strategy for Solving the Taiwan Issue: Ambiguity Between the Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait is Gradually Increasing), *Lianhe Zaobao*, June 11, 2022, at <https://www.kzaobao.com/guping/20220611/118958.html>

Xi's approach to Taiwan has been driven by the legacy of prior PRC policies, his perceptions of cross-strait dynamics, and domestic politics in Taiwan. He came to power during Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou's second term, when Ma's popularity was plummeting and infighting within the Kuomintang (KMT) Party was impacting Ma's ability to govern.<sup>2</sup> At that time, despite increased economic links and trade, there was substantial Taiwan resistance to deepening cross-strait relations. The Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement that Taipei had signed in 2013 faced significant Taiwan public opposition and protests in March and April 2014 by those who feared the agreement would harm Taiwan's economy and leave it vulnerable to PRC pressures.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, some in Beijing were worried that Ma was interested in capturing the economic benefits of closer ties with China, but he was unwilling to address the difficult political questions required for unification.<sup>4</sup>

In late 2014, the Taiwan opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), led by Tsai Ing-wen, gained significant ground in local elections, winning 13 out of 22 key cities and counties.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, Tsai was elected Taiwan's president. Beijing was worried that Tsai and her party were set on promoting Taiwan independence and her presidential victory would stall, if not reverse, Beijing's progress on Taiwan.

Xi responded to these changes by pushing a bolder, less flexible, more unilateral, and more coercive PRC approach toward Taiwan to prevent independence and achieve unification with the island. This essay highlights four key shifts in Beijing's policy toward Taiwan under Xi Jinping, largely beginning in 2014.

### **Expanding the definition of Taiwan independence and defining the PRC's position regarding the status quo**

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<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Chung, "Ma Ying-jeou's Approval Sinks to Record 9pc amid KMT Infighting," *South China Morning Post*, September 17, 2013, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1311135/ma-ying-jeous-approval-sinks-record-9pc-amid-kmt-infighting>; "Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou's Poll Ratings at 13%," *Taiwan News*, January 1, 2013, at <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/2111168>

<sup>3</sup> Taiwan protesters occupied the Legislative Yuan, clashed with local police, and organized a subsequent massive public protest involving hundreds of thousands of people. The protesters' use of sunflowers as a symbol of hope led to the labeling of these efforts as the "Sunflower Movement." See J. Michael Cole, "Say Goodbye to 'Peaceful Unification,'" *The Diplomat*, April 1, 2014, at <https://thediplomat.com/2014/04/say-goodbye-to-peaceful-unification/>; J. Michael Cole, "Riot Police Crack Down on Taiwanese Protesters," *The Diplomat*, March 24, 2014, at <https://thediplomat.com/2014/03/riot-police-crack-down-on-taiwanese-protesters/>

<sup>4</sup> Richard C. Bush, "Taiwan-China: On the Wang Yu-chi-Zhang Zhijun Meeting," Brookings, November 17, 2014, at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2014/11/17/taiwan-china-on-the-wang-yu-chi-zhang-zhijun-meeting/>

<sup>5</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser and Jacqueline Vitello, "An Analysis of Taiwan's Nine-in-One Local Elections," Center for Strategic and International Studies, December 1, 2014, at <https://www.csis.org/analysis/analysis-taiwan's-nine-one-local-elections>

The first shift occurred in PRC threat perceptions. Even though Tsai has not attempted any major moves, like those of some of her predecessors, to promote Taiwan independence, Beijing remains concerned about what it perceives to be a growing number of smaller Taiwan and U.S. actions. This includes, for example, perceived attempts by the DPP to revise Taiwan's history and history books, Taipei's reluctance to allow Kinmen and Matsu to establish more links with the mainland, continued and more significant U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, and a growing number of U.S. congressional visits to the island. These actions, combined with the fact that the younger generation in Taiwan is less interested in unification, are sparking concern in Beijing that China must respond to these largely unfavorable trends.

As a result, Xi has embraced more specific and expansive language to capture a broader range of Taiwan activities that China views as pro-Taiwan independence. In November 2016, during a speech commemorating Sun Yat-sen, Xi spelled out the Six Any's (六个任何): "China will never allow anyone, any organization, or any political party to rip out any part of our territory at any time or in any form."<sup>6</sup> In 2017, Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Yu Zhengsheng declared that any form of "disguised Taiwan independence" (变相台独) is doomed to failure.

Xi's and Yu's remarks led to a lengthy May 2017 article in *People's Daily* categorizing the various forms of Taiwan independence. The article argues that Tsai and the DPP often disguise Taiwan independence behind seemingly non-independence-related activities. It explains that because of the challenges of engaging in political independence, the DPP may instead embrace other legal, economic, or cultural measures to make progress. The article largely defines any and all Taiwan efforts to decrease ties, reliance, or connections with China as a form of independence.<sup>7</sup> In March 2018, Xi Jinping added that China will not tolerate any forms of "incremental independence" (渐进台独) or any attempts to seek external support to protect Taiwan independence.<sup>8</sup>

Reflecting sentiment in Beijing, former KMT chairman Hung Hsiu-Chu publicly asserted in January 2018 that maintaining the status quo and not pushing for unification is a form of "disguised Taiwan independence." She urged the pan-blue parties in Taiwan not only to oppose

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<sup>6</sup> "习近平对台工作重要思想：目标取向与路径选择" (Xi Jinping's Important Thoughts on Taiwan: Direction of Goals and Path of Decisions), Ministry of Commerce, November 29, 2017, at <http://tga.mofcom.gov.cn/article/zyjh/201712/20171202682984.shtml>; see also Xin Qiang, *Mainland China's Taiwan Policy: From Peaceful Development to Selective Engagement* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p. 87.

<sup>7</sup> "什么是'变相台独'?" (What is "Taiwan Independence in Disguise"?), *Haiwai Net*, May 26, 2017, at [https://m.haiwainet.cn/middle/456465/2017/0526/content\\_30936406\\_1.html#/](https://m.haiwainet.cn/middle/456465/2017/0526/content_30936406_1.html#/)

<sup>8</sup> "与台胞分享发展机遇，反分裂意志坚定有力：各界人士及舆论热议习近平主席讲话" (Sharing Development Opportunities and Will to Fight Against Separatism with Taiwan Compatriots: Xi Jinping's Speech Is Hotly Debated in Public Opinion and By All in Taiwan), *Xinhua*, March 31, 2018, at [http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018lh/2018-03/21/c\\_1122571853.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2018lh/2018-03/21/c_1122571853.htm)

independence but also to move forward on unification.<sup>9</sup> Her comments were circulated widely by mainland media, suggesting Beijing's endorsement.

This expansion of what constitutes Taiwan independence is a departure from earlier statements. The 2005 Anti-Secession Law, passed under Hu Jintao, was focused on preventing “the fact of Taiwan’s secession from China,” “major incidents” leading to secession, or “possibilities for peaceful reunification becoming “completely exhausted.”<sup>10</sup> Xi now includes lesser transgressions promoting Taiwan independence and maintaining an indefinite or permanent separation of Taiwan as symbols of promoting Taiwan independence.<sup>11</sup> This reflects Beijing’s view that Taipei and Washington are salami-slicing their way to eventual Taiwan independence.

During a virtual meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden in November 2021, Xi went even further to define the Chinese position on the status quo in the Taiwan Strait:<sup>12</sup>

The true status quo of the Taiwan question and what lies at the heart of one China are as follows: there is but one China in the world and Taiwan is part of China, and the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing China.<sup>13</sup>

Xi’s expanded definition of Taiwan independence as well as his definition of the status quo have several implications for PRC policy toward Taiwan (and the United States). First, the broadening of independence to include an indefinite separation of Taiwan from China means that Beijing can no longer accept a lack of progress on unification (even if the lack of progress is because Beijing’s offers to Taipei are not viewed as credible and are not what Taipei is willing to accept). Second, Xi’s definition of the status quo as consistent with the one China principle portrays

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<sup>9</sup> “洪秀柱：只‘反独’不‘促统’等于变相‘台独’” (Hung Hsiu-Chu: “Anti-independence” Without “Supporting Unification” Is “Taiwan Independence in Disguise”), *Chinese American Professors and Professors Network*, January 3, 2018, at <http://scholarsupdate.hi2net.com/news.asp?NewsID=23969>

<sup>10</sup> “Anti-Secession Law (Full Text),” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States, March 15, 2005, at <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceus/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Under Jiang Zemin, for example, Beijing believed that China “cannot allow resolution of the Taiwan issue to be postponed indefinitely.” This 2000 White Paper on China’s Taiwan policy does not, however, explicitly characterize and label such behavior as a form of Taiwan independence. See “White Paper: The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue,” Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2000, at <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/celt/eng/zt/zgtw/t125229.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Though China has iterated some variations of the statement of “the heart of one China,” Beijing has not explicitly defined this as the status quo. According to Xin Qiang, Xi’s statement was the first time a Chinese leader defined the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. See Xin Qiang, *Mainland China’s Taiwan Policy*, p. 91.

<sup>13</sup> “President Xi Jinping Has a Virtual Meeting with US President Joe Biden,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 16, 2021, at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/202111/t20211116\\_10448843.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/202111/t20211116_10448843.html)

Taiwan (and the United States) as revisionist, undermining dynamics in the Taiwan Strait. Third, the generally greater sense of PRC alarm – that almost every action taken by Tsai and the DPP has some pro-independence motive behind it – means that China now must take more across-the-board actions to counter and punish what it perceives to be a comprehensive range of pro-independence Taiwan activities. Beijing also must further develop its capabilities to prepare for worst-case outcomes.

### **Simultaneously pushing for PRC national rejuvenation and unification**

A second important shift under Xi Jinping has been the assessment that China’s growing power and path toward national rejuvenation is both a driver and a result of unification with Taiwan. Although Xi’s predecessors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, used language associating Taiwan unification with China’s growing power and national rejuvenation, they mainly viewed it as a one-way relationship in which a more powerful China is capable of solving the Taiwan problem.<sup>14</sup> Xi’s argument is bidirectional: PRC national rejuvenation allows and requires that Beijing push for Taiwan unification.

In 2015, during the first meeting between the two leaders (Xi and Ma) across the Taiwan Strait since 1949, Xi “called on the two sides across the Straits to make joint efforts to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”<sup>15</sup> At the 19th Party Congress in 2017, Xi stated that “maintaining lasting prosperity and stability in Hong Kong and Macao and achieving China’s full reunification are essential to realizing national rejuvenation.”<sup>16</sup>

In his January 2019 speech to Taiwan compatriots, Xi voiced that China “must be reunified, and will surely be reunified ... [and] is also critical to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation in the new era.”<sup>17</sup> He explained that “the Taiwan question originated in a weak and ravaged China, and it will definitely end with China’s rejuvenation.”<sup>18</sup> Similar to statements by prior Chinese leaders, he noted that “we should not allow this problem to be passed down from one generation to the next.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Michael D. Swaine, “Recent Chinese Views on the Taiwan Issue,” *China Leadership Monitor*, December 1, 2021, at <https://www.prcleader.org/swaine-3>

<sup>15</sup> “Leaders Across Taiwan Straits Meet for First Time in 66 Years,” Xinhua, November 7, 2015, at [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/07/content\\_22397292.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-11/07/content_22397292.htm)

<sup>16</sup> “Full Text of Xi Jinping’s Report at 19th CPC National Congress,” *China Daily*, November 4, 2017, at [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content\\_34115212.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/19thcpcnationalcongress/2017-11/04/content_34115212.htm)

<sup>17</sup> Xi Jinping, “Working Together to Realize Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation and Advance China’s Peaceful Reunification,” Speech at the Meeting Marking the 40th Anniversary of Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, January 2, 2019, at [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201904/t20190412\\_12155687.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201904/t20190412_12155687.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

China's August 2022 new White Paper on Taiwan, titled "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era," clarifies why unification and rejuvenation are mutually dependent. On the one hand, China can and should leverage the growing strength accompanying its rejuvenation to promote unification. A stronger China would be more capable of defending against perceived Taiwan separatist activities and external interference. China's development and growth would "provide the broad space and great opportunities for cross-Straits exchange and cooperation."<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, unification with Taiwan would enable PRC rejuvenation by eliminating the core security threat and challenge that Beijing faces:

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.<sup>21</sup>

Xi's close linkage of unification with rejuvenation elevates the importance of Beijing's (unilateral) role in driving unification. As expressed in China's 2022 White Paper, China's "national development and progress [should] set the direction of cross-Straits relations."<sup>22</sup> Beijing should not be shy about leveraging China's full political, economic, and military power to attempt to shape cross-Straits dynamics, including through more coercive means.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era," August 2022, Beijing, at <https://english.news.cn/20220810/df9d3b8702154b34bbf1d451b99bf64a/c.html>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> This linkage has also led some Chinese scholars to assess that China now places more hope on China to drive unification than any actor on Taiwan. Xin Qiang, a scholar at Fudan University, for example, argues that moving forward Beijing's Taiwan policy will be less impacted by domestic politics in Taiwan, and instead Beijing will develop its goals, next steps, and timetables based on its own desires. He also believes that Beijing will need to prioritize self-development, "irreversibly enlarging the comprehensive power asymmetry across the Strait as time elapses" to then "equip Beijing with more powerful policy instruments" to use against Taiwan. See Xin Qiang, *Mainland China's Taiwan Policy*, p. 95.

**Table 1: Comparing the Xi’s Taiwan policy with those of his predecessors**

<b>Jiang Zemin (1993–2003)</b>	<b>Hu Jintao (2003–2013)</b>	<b>Xi Jinping (2013–present)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Basic guideline:</b> peaceful unification, One Country, Two Systems (1C2S) (but China will not rule out the possible use of military force)</li> <li>• China “will actively promote people-to-people contacts and economic and cultural exchanges between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Basic guideline:</b> peaceful unification, 1C2S (but China will not rule out the possible use of military force)</li> <li>• Peaceful development of cross-Strait relations is the political basis (or intermediate step) for peaceful unification. “Anything conducive to the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations must be energetically promoted; anything detrimental must be staunchly opposed”</li> <li>• China’s progress from “reform, opening up, and modernization [...] is a strong foundation and reliable safeguard for promoting the development of cross-Straits relations and realizing the peaceful reunification of the motherland”</li> <li>• The Anti-Secession Law (2005) codifies into law PRC “policies and principles for the settlement of the Taiwan question”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Basic guideline:</b> peaceful unification, 1C2S (but China will not rule out the possible use of military force)</li> <li>• “Complete reunification is critical to national rejuvenation” and China’s “national development and progress set the direction of cross-Strait relations”</li> <li>• China is “seeking a ‘Two Systems’ solution to the Taiwan question and making innovative efforts toward peaceful reunification”</li> <li>• “Abiding by the one-China principle and safeguarding the prospects for peaceful unification”</li> <li>• “Further integrating development across the Straits and consolidating the foundations for peaceful reunification”</li> <li>• The Anti-Secession Law (2005) and National Security Law (2015) codify PRC policies and principles that maintain that Taiwan is a part of China</li> </ul>

**Sources:** For Jiang’s policies: Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council, “White Paper-- The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue,” February 2000. For Hu’s policies: Hu Jintao, “Let Us Join Hands to Promote the Peaceful Development of Cross-Straits Relations and Strive with a United Resolve for the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation,” Speech at the Forum Marking the 30th Anniversary of the Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, December 31, 2008. For Xi’s policies: Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, “The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era,” August 2022.

This is a shift from Hu Jintao’s emphasis on peaceful development of cross-Strait relations as the political basis or as the potential intermediate step for achieving unification. Peaceful development relies on advancing economic cooperation, strengthening cultural ties, and increasing two-way visits and exchanges to move forward on unification. The change to more than merely peaceful development likely reflects Xi’s assessment that growing trade and other ties by themselves have not produced the desired results.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Even in terms of PRC economic engagement with Taiwan, China’s August 2022 White Paper, states that China must push for more integrated development, including development of a pilot and experimental zone in Fujian province that could showcase the benefits of integration for the Taiwan people. See Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the State Council

Even though Xi's more heavy-handed approach toward Taiwan has not changed the tide of public opinion on the island, Xi appears set on being more proactive and forceful. In November 2021, he noted that China "maintains the initiative and ability to steer cross-strait relations."<sup>25</sup> In July 2022, and likely as part of his effort to best support and explain Xi's Taiwan policy, State Council Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) director Liu Jieyi wrote that China needs to "tightly grasp the leadership and initiative in cross-strait relations" and should convert "its growing comprehensive national power and significant institutional advantages towards progress on Taiwan."<sup>26</sup>

Beyond linking unification with rejuvenation, Xi has attached a date for rejuvenation. In 2012, he stated that "the goal of building China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious can be achieved by 2049, when the PRC marks its centenary; and the dream of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will then be realized."<sup>27</sup> This appears to set 2049 as the timeline for rejuvenation.

This has sparked debate as to whether Xi intends to set 2049 as a deadline for unification with the island and what that means. Thus far, Xi has not clearly stated that China must achieve unification with Taiwan by 2049, but some Chinese scholars view China's centennial anniversary as "a deadline within a non-deadline."<sup>28</sup> At a minimum, the 2049 date provides an approximate benchmark for Beijing's planning.

It also shows some degree of patience on Xi's end. The potential 2049 timeline is longer than the length of time that Jiang Zemin reportedly had in mind in 2004 for unification with Taiwan by 2020, but it is shorter than Hu Jintao's undefined (and perhaps indefinite) timeline for

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Information Office of the People's Republic of China, "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era," August 2022.

<sup>25</sup> "Full Text: Communique of 6th Plenary Session of 19th CPC Central Committee," November 11, 2021, at [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/11/c\\_1310305166.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/11/c_1310305166.htm); see also Xin Qiang, *Mainland China's Taiwan Policy*, p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> "刘结一：在新时代新征程上奋力推进祖国统一进程" (Liu Jieyi: In the New Era and New Journey, Strive to Advance National Reunification), Taiwan Affairs Office, July 7, 2022, at [http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/news/202207/t20220707\\_12450242.htm](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/m/news/202207/t20220707_12450242.htm)

<sup>27</sup> Xi Jinping, "Achieving Rejuvenation is the Dream of the Chinese People," November 29, 2012, at <http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/c23934/202006/32191c5bbdb04cbab6df01e5077d1c60.shtml>

<sup>28</sup> Richard C. Bush, "From Persuasion to Coercion: Beijing's Approach to Taiwan and Taiwan's Response," Brookings, November 2019, p. 7, at [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FP\\_20191120\\_beijing\\_taiwan\\_bush.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/FP_20191120_beijing_taiwan_bush.pdf)

unification.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Xi has repeatedly noted that China has patience and strives for peaceful unification.<sup>30</sup>

### **Developing a “solution” to Taiwan unification that enables the PRC to maintain control**

With a desire to make progress on unification, Xi has pushed for developing a Taiwan “solution.” Although related, a 1C2S Taiwan solution (“一国两制”台湾方案), also known as a “Two Systems” Taiwan solution (“两制”台湾方案), is different from the 1C2S *guideline* or *principle* (“一国两制”方针) that Deng Xiaoping proposed in 1979 for resolving the Taiwan question. The 1C2S principle states:

[The] two systems will be practiced within the sovereign state of the People’s Republic of China. On the premise of one China, the main body of the country will practice the socialist system, while the existing capitalist system and way of life in Taiwan will remain unchanged for a long period of time. This concept is highly flexible in that it both gives full expression to the principle of bringing out China’s reunification and upholding its sovereignty and takes into full consideration the history and realities of Taiwan.<sup>31</sup>

This principle is broad enough to be applied to develop two different 1C2S models, one for Hong Kong and one for Macau. It does not strictly constrain Chinese leaders from setting their own direction on Taiwan or from adding details to their plans for unification.<sup>32</sup> A 1C2S Taiwan solution is more detailed and specific to Taiwan.

Prior to Xi, China did not explicitly require that Taiwan accept the 1C2S principle as the basis for progress (even though it was relatively clear that the 1C2S principle was the ultimate Chinese

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<sup>29</sup> Ray Cheung, “Jiang Zemin Sets 2020 Deadline for Return of Island to Mainland,” *South China Morning Post*, July 16, 2004, at <https://www.scmp.com/article/463299/jiang-zemin-sets-2020-deadline-return-island-mainland>

<sup>30</sup> For examples, see Xi’s statement in 2013 that emphasizes his patience, “China’s Xi to Tread Peaceful, Patient Path on Taiwan,” Reuters, February 25, 2013, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-china-taiwan/chinas-xi-to-tread-peaceful-patient-path-on-taiwan-idUKBRE91O0CA20130225>. Similarly, in 2021 Xi continued to mention China’s patience. See “Xi’s Remarks Set Direction for Resolving Taiwan Question,” November 20, 2021, at [http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/20/c\\_1310322772.htm](http://www.news.cn/english/2021-11/20/c_1310322772.htm)

<sup>31</sup> “A Policy of ‘One Country, Two Systems’ on Taiwan,” Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Republic of Estonia, May 17, 2004, at <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceee/eng/zggk/xzgwjjs/t110298.htm>

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Hu’s reference in passing: “Let Us Join Hands to Promote the Peaceful Development of Cross-Straits Relations and Strive with a United Resolve for the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation,” USC US-China Institute, December 31, 2008, at <https://china.usc.edu/hu-jintao-let-us-join-hands-promote-peaceful-development-cross-straits-relations-and-strive-united>

solution). Beijing also spelled out more favorable conditions that Taiwan could enjoy after unification. For example, the 1993 and 2000 PRC White Papers on Taiwan, released under Jiang Zemin emphasize that as long as Taiwan agrees to the premise of “one China,” everything else is negotiable.<sup>33</sup> These two official Chinese documents also list what Taiwan may enjoy post-unification – namely, a high-degree of autonomy and the ability to “run its own party, political, military, economic, and financial affairs.” This includes Taiwan keeping its own military and promises from Beijing that Taiwan representatives would be appointed to senior positions within the Chinese central government. Hu Jintao did not publish an updated White Paper on Taiwan and his views on what Taiwan would look like post-unification reflect those that had been set out under Jiang Zemin (see Table 2).<sup>34</sup>

**Table 2 PRC promises to Taiwan post-peaceful unification**

<b>Jiang Zemin</b> (1993–2003)	<b>Hu Jintao</b> (2003–2013)	<b>Xi Jinping</b> (2013–present)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the premise of the one China principle, any matter can be negotiated</li> <li>• “On the premise of one China, socialism on the mainland and capitalism on Taiwan can coexist and develop side by side for a long time without one swallowing up the other”</li> <li>• Taiwan can maintain its socio-economic system</li> <li>• Taiwan will enjoy a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region (SAR)</li> <li>• Taiwan “will have its own administrative and legislative powers”</li> <li>• Taiwan will maintain “an independent judiciary and the right of adjudication on the island”</li> <li>• Taiwan “will run its own party, political, military, economic, and financial affairs.”</li> <li>• Taiwan “may conclude commercial and cultural agreements with foreign countries and enjoy certain rights in foreign affairs.”</li> <li>• Taiwan “may keep its military forces and the mainland will not dispatch troops or administrative personnel to the island.”</li> <li>• “Representatives of the government of the special administrative region and those from different circles of Taiwan may be appointed to senior posts in the central government and participate in the running of national affairs”</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China’s principles of peaceful unification and the 1C2S will “take full account of Taiwan’s realities and are conducive to long-term stability in Taiwan after reunification.”</li> <li>• “After peaceful reunification, Taiwan may continue its current social system and enjoy a high degree of autonomy in accordance with the law. The two social systems will develop side by side for a long time to come.”</li> <li>• “Provided that China’s sovereignty, security, and development interests are guaranteed, after unification Taiwan will enjoy a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region.”</li> <li>• “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.”</li> <li>• “Taiwan compatriots who support reunification of the country and rejuvenation of the nation will be masters of the region, contributing and benefitting from China’s development.”</li> <li>• “Foreign countries can continue to develop economic and cultural relations with Taiwan. With the approval of the central government of China, they may set up consulates or other official and quasi-official institutions in Taiwan, international organizations and agencies may establish offices, relevant international conventions can be applied, and relevant international conferences can be held there.”</li> </ul>

<sup>33</sup> “中国政府白皮书：一个中国的原则与台湾问题(全文)” (Chinese Government White Paper: One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue [Full Text]), *Sina News*, February 21, 2022, at <https://news.sina.com.cn/china/2000-2-21/63826.html>

<sup>34</sup> “President Hu Offers Six Proposals for Peaceful Development of Cross-Strait Relationship,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 31, 2008, at <https://www.mfa.gov.cn/ce/ceus/eng/zt/999999999/t529949.htm>

**Sources:** See Table 1.

As cross-Strait relations improved under Hu Jintao and Ma Ying-jeou, Taipei also put forth its own proposals. In 2012, for example, Ma proposed a “one Republic of China (ROC), two areas” formulation: Taipei viewed the one China as the ROC: the ROC includes Taiwan and mainland China, and there are two regions of the mainland region and Taiwan region. Beijing did not publicly criticize or denounce Ma’s position, but some in Beijing grew impatient with the political impasse.<sup>35</sup>

Xi shared such frustrations and was less tolerant of what he viewed as unclear progress. In September 2014, he told a visiting delegation of pro-unification Taiwan political parties that the basic guideline for Taiwan is “peaceful reunification; One Country, Two Systems.”<sup>36</sup> He suggested some flexibility, noting that Beijing would “fully consider the real situation in Taiwan, opinions and suggestions from various sectors on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and take into account benefits and other arrangements for the Taiwanese people.”<sup>37</sup>

This formulation rules out Ma’s interpretation of “one ROC, two areas” because it requires that both sides agree that there is one country, or the *same* country, and the PRC (not the ROC) represents China. The flexibility for each sides to hold its respective interpretations of “one China” was gone. This suggests that Beijing was ready to develop a 1C2S Taiwan model that would be similar to the models used for Hong Kong and Macau. Taipei would be subordinate to Beijing. Not surprisingly, Ma refused to accept Xi’s new suggestion and, given Ma’s weak standing in Taiwan, Xi may not have cared.

As Tsai succeeded Ma to the presidency in 2016, Xi used his January 2019 speech to Taiwan compatriots to urge compatriots to “explore a ‘two systems’ solution to the Taiwan question and to enrich practical efforts toward peaceful reunification.”<sup>38</sup> Under this guidance, Chinese scholars and academics engaged in significant discussions and debates about what such a

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<sup>35</sup> Dean P. Chen, “Sustaining the Triangular Balance: The Taiwan Strait Policy of Barack Obama, Xi Jinping, and Ma Ying-Jeou,” University of Maryland School of Law, September 2013, pp. 66–67, at <https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1215&context=mscas>

<sup>36</sup> Jing Huang, “Xi Jinping’s Taiwan Policy: Boxing Taiwan In With the One-China Framework,” in *Taiwan and China: Fitful Embrace* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), p.244.

<sup>37</sup> Lawrence Chung, “‘One Country, Two Systems’ Right Formula for Taiwan, Xi Jinping Reiterates,” *South China Morning Post*, September 27, 2014, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1601307/one-country-two-systems-right-formula-taiwan-xi-jinping-reiterates>

<sup>38</sup> Xi Jinping, “Working Together to Realize Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation and Advance China’s Peaceful Reunification,” January 2, 2019.

scenario could look like. Initial explorations in early 2019 suggested more flexibility on the part of Beijing to consider a range of promises to Taiwan, similar to those offered by Jiang and Hu.<sup>39</sup>

This move, however, was short-lived as massive protests erupted in Hong Kong and China cracked down on what it saw as destabilizing and pro-separation efforts. Beijing punished and jailed pro-democracy protestors and passed the 2020 National Security Law that further erodes freedoms and undermines Hong Kong's ability to hold free and fair elections.<sup>40</sup>

Xi's proposal to develop a 1C2S solution for Taiwan met with widespread resistance in Taiwan. Political leaders – and across the island's political spectrum – increased their opposition. Many

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<sup>39</sup> In early March 2019 on the eve of China's annual National People's Congress, Wang Weixing, a representative of China's People's Political Consultative Conference who focuses on cross-strait issues, shared ten types of rights that Taiwan could potentially enjoy under the "peaceful reunification, 'one country, two systems' model." These include: 1) the Chinese central government would delegate authority to the Taiwan government to self-organize its government institutions. China would not send people, including government officials, to Taiwan and Taiwan would manage its own political and military systems. The Chinese central government would allow Taiwan representatives to participate in Chinese central government work affairs. 2) Taiwan's legislative powers could reside within its own political system. Beijing would delegate power to Taiwan to organize its own system and Taiwan could pass its own laws as long as the laws do not undermine China's national sovereignty and unification. 3) Taiwan could have its own self-administration rights and manage its own political and military affairs. This includes setting policies that are different from Chinese policies. 4) Taiwan could have its own independent judicial system and Taiwan could maintain those laws that do not conflict with or undermine China's national sovereignty and unification. 5) Taiwan could enjoy specified foreign-policy rights. Although Beijing would determine all Chinese foreign policy, the Chinese central government would delegate authority to Taiwan to allow it to sign agreements with other countries or regional organizations in the name of China's Taiwan or China's Taipei for the purposes of developing economic or cultural ties. 6) Taiwan could have its own defense and military as long as they do not pose a threat to China. 7) Taiwan could enjoy fiscal independence and manage its own government revenues and expenditures. China would not tax Taiwan; if needed, the Chinese central government would even provide subsidies to Taiwan. 8) Taiwan could have its own independent currency and currency management system. 9) Under a unified Chinese customs policy, Taiwan could establish customs for its own region. 10) Taiwan could issue its own China's Taiwan passports and other tourism documents. Although Wang is not a high-ranking Chinese government official, the fact that he shared this detailed list publicly prior to the 2019 Two Sessions suggests that there was likely at least some high-level support for his views. See Zuo Yanbing, "军方学者王卫星：台湾应了解‘一国两制’台湾方案的实质内涵" (Military Scholar Wang Weixing: Taiwan Should Understand the Essence of the 'One Country, Two Systems' Plan for Taiwan), *iTaiwannews*, March 3, 2019, at <http://taiwan.cri.cn/20190303/d382da43-a0c3-f27a-58e1-44b049eceb3b.html>

<sup>40</sup> Lindsay Maizland, "Hong Kong's Freedoms: What China Promised and How It's Cracking Down," Council on Foreign Relations, May 19, 2021, at <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/hong-kong-freedoms-democracy-protests-china-crackdown>

no longer believe the promised “two systems” exist in Hong Kong, given China’s efforts to ensure that Hong Kong’s legislature is filled with “patriots.”<sup>41</sup> Taiwan is not interested in following Hong Kong’s path.

Instead of exploring other ways to move forward, Xi doubled-down. In June 2022, State Council TAO deputy head Liu Junchuan stated that “after unification, Taiwan compatriots who support unification will be the ones with the real power in Taiwan.”<sup>42</sup> In his July 2022 speech commemorating the 25th anniversary of Hong Kong’s return to China, Xi underscored that “there is no reason for us to change such a good [1C2S] policy.” He offered four “valuable experiences and profound inspirations” from implementing the system in Hong Kong, including:<sup>43</sup>

- China “must fully and faithfully implement the principle of ‘one country, two systems,’” stressing that “the more firmly the ‘one country’ principle is upheld, the greater strength the ‘two systems’ will be unleashed for the development of the SARs.”
- “The central government’s overall jurisdiction over the SARs underpins their high degree of autonomy, and such autonomy bestowed by law is fully respected and resolutely safeguarded by the central government.”
- China “must ensure that Hong Kong is administered by patriots. It is the universal political rule that a government must be in the hands of patriots.”
- Beijing supports Hong Kong “to improve its presence as an international financial, shipping, and trading center, to keep its business environment free, open, and regulated, and to maintain the common law so as to expand and facilitate its exchanges with the world.”

Xi’s speech made clear that the most important part of the 1C2S is “one China.” The “two systems” are subordinate to the “one China” and, as a result, they are not guaranteed. Most of Xi’s discussions on the “two systems” focused on preserving Hong Kong’s economic and business environment. Common law, which is needed to protect financial exchanges and transactions, was mentioned last. This suggests that it is highly unlikely Taiwan will be allowed to maintain its democracy under China’s 1C2S solution for the island.

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<sup>41</sup> “Former Taiwan President Admits ‘One Country, Two Systems’ is Dead,” *Taiwan News*, March 12, 2021, at <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/4149035>

<sup>42</sup> Liu Junchuan, “统一后，拥护祖国统一的台湾同胞将在台湾真正当家做主” (After Reunification, Taiwan Compatriots Who Support Reunification of the Motherland Will Truly Be Masters of Their Own Affairs in Taiwan), June 8, 2022, *Sina News*, at <https://finance.sina.com.cn/wm/2022-06-08/doc-imizmscu5795136.shtml>

<sup>43</sup> “Xi Addresses the Meeting Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of Hong Kong’s Return to the Motherland and the Inaugural Ceremony of the Sixth-term Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region,” Xinhua, July 2, 2022, at [http://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202207/02/content\\_WS62bf8de6c6d02e533532d147.html](http://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202207/02/content_WS62bf8de6c6d02e533532d147.html)

As a result of Xi's remarks, Chinese scholars have started questioning whether it will be required for Taiwan, like Hong Kong, to be governed by "patriots" after unification.<sup>44</sup> Even before Xi's remarks, Chinese scholars were already asking how much control China would have over Taiwan's armed forces. Some speculated that China may have to radically transform Taiwan's military if it is to be kept in any shape or any form.<sup>45</sup> Xi's emphasis on Beijing's control is likely to further undermine explorations of the range of "rights" or "privileges" that Taiwan might be afforded in any part of a peaceful 1C2S unification.

One line of reasoning that emerges from Xi's positions as well as from academic discussions in China is that the more cooperative or "patriotic" Taipei is in dealing with Beijing, the better Taiwan's negotiating position with Beijing will be and the more "rights" Taiwan may receive post-unification. If Taipei or Taiwan's citizens are not willing to engage in consultations, then China will have to drive this process and Beijing may single-handedly set the conditions for unification. Indeed, Chinese analysts have noted that the terms for how Taiwan will be treated or governed are likely to be much less favorable for the island if China must use significant military force or launch an amphibious invasion to achieve unification.<sup>46</sup>

Beijing's August 2022 White Paper lays this out clearly (see Table 2). Any 1C2S solution for Taiwan will need to factor in "long-term stability." Beijing conditioned Taiwan's ability to enjoy "a high degree of autonomy" on "peaceful reunification" and "provided that China's sovereignty, security, and development interests are guaranteed." The new White Paper does not mention that Taiwan will have its own legislative and judicial powers, omits the guarantee that Taiwan can run its own internal affairs, and does not include the promise that the island can keep its own military (and that China will not send its military or other personnel to the island). It seems that the only system that Taiwan can keep fully intact is its "social system," which includes some protections for private property among other issues. The statement that "Taiwan compatriots who support reunification of the country and rejuvenation of the nation will be masters of the region" suggests that China will determine that Taiwan is governed by "patriots." Adding up all these elements, the 2022 Chinese White Paper reveals that Beijing's "Two Systems" solution for Taiwan will not allow Taiwan to maintain its current democracy if there is any chance that a

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<sup>44</sup> "学者：北京对港加强全面管治后‘两制’台湾方案必包含爱国者治" (Scholars: After Beijing Strengthens Comprehensive Governance Toward Hong Kong, Patriotism Must Be Included in Taiwan 'Two Systems' Plan), *Lianhe Zaobao*, July 11, 2002, at <https://www.kzaobao.com/guping/20220711/120897.html>

<sup>45</sup> Tan Chuanyi, "统一后如何安排台军?" (What Should Be Done With Taiwan's Military After Unification?), *Huaxia*, February 11, 2022, at <https://www.huaxia.com/c/2022/02/11/1007689.shtml>; Ni Yongjie, "关于‘两制’台湾方案与两岸民主协商的若干思考" (Some Thoughts on the 'Two Systems' Taiwan Plan and Cross-Strait Democratic Negotiations), *台海研究* (Cross-Taiwan Strait Studies), no. 4 (2019), pp. 14–20.

<sup>46</sup> Zhu Lei, "Multiple-Scheme Nature of the 'One Country, Two Systems' Taiwan Scheme" ('一国两制'台湾方案的多安构想), *台海研究* (Cross-Taiwan Strait Studies), no. 1 (2022), pp. 14–19.

popularly elected political leader in Taiwan – perhaps from the DPP or another Green party – will oppose Beijing.

### **Escalating and increasing PRC coercion**

The fourth evolution of Xi’s policy is China’s significantly escalated coercive approach toward Taiwan. From 2016 onwards, Beijing suspended official cross-Strait communication channels and began to rely on unilateral means to shape cross-Strait dynamics. China is using carrots and increasingly bigger sticks to wield PRC capabilities against Taiwan, the United States, and the international community at large.

Politically, Beijing began limiting Taiwan’s international space and imposing penalties on what it views as problematic individuals, groups, or countries supporting Taiwan independence. From 2016 to August 2022, Beijing ended the diplomatic truce that existed under Ma’s tenure and poached eight of Taiwan’s remaining diplomatic partners.<sup>47</sup> Although Beijing allowed Taipei to participate as an observer in the World Health Assembly in 2009 and as a guest in the International Civil Aviation Organization in 2013, Beijing worked to block these opportunities after the DPP came to power. Since 2016, China has sought to exert its legal control over Taiwan and has pressured countries to extradite Taiwan citizens to China. At the same time, China has limited visits and interactions of DPP leaders to China and Hong Kong and has detained Taiwan citizens for political “crimes.”<sup>48</sup> In January 2021, China blacklisted a number of former U.S. government officials from visiting China, listing “gravely interfere[ing] in China’s internal affairs” as a key reason for such PRC action.<sup>49</sup> In November 2021, China went a step further and blacklisted current, sitting Taiwan government officials.<sup>50</sup> This month, China arrested pro-

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas J. Shattuck, “The Race to Zero? China’s Poaching of Taiwan’s Diplomatic Allies,” *Orbis*, vol. 64, no. 2 (2020), pp. 334–352, at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7102519/>; Joseph Yeh, “Does Taiwan Need Diplomatic Allies?” *Focus Taiwan*, February 2, 2022, at <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202202020001>

<sup>48</sup> See Bonny Lin et al., “Competition in the Gray Zone: Countering China’s Coercion Against U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific,” RAND Corporation, 2022, pp. 43–47.

<sup>49</sup> “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Announces Sanctions on Pompeo and Others,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, January 20, 2021, at [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2535\\_665405/202101/t20210120\\_697094.html](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/202101/t20210120_697094.html)

<sup>50</sup> “China Declares Lifelong Criminal Liability for Taiwan ‘Diehard Separatists,’” *Tibetan Review*, November 6, 2021, at <https://www.tibetanreview.net/china-declares-lifelong-criminal-liability-for-taiwan-diehard-separatists/>; Chen Yun, Chien Hui-ju, and Jonathan Chin, “China Puts Premier Su On No-entry List,” *Taipei Times*, November 6, 2021, at <https://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2021/11/06/2003767399>

democracy Taiwan leader Yang Chih-yuan in Wenzhou, China, on charges of “endangering national security” and “secession.”<sup>51</sup>

Economically, and on the carrots side, China rolled out 31 preferential policies in 2018 that benefit Taiwan firms operating in China, 26 additional measures in 2019 that allowed Taiwan nationals to use PRC consular services abroad, and 11 new incentives in 2020 to help Taiwan companies operate in China during COVID-19.<sup>52</sup> These PRC central government policies were also accompanied by provincial and local PRC preferential policies.<sup>53</sup>

Such economic carrots, however, have been overshadowed by a growing list of PRC coercive measures. These include pressuring multinational or foreign companies to abide by Beijing’s policies on Taiwan since 2018; pressuring Taiwan corporate leaders and firms operating in China to align with PRC views; increasing inspections and rejections of Taiwan’s agricultural and other goods, particularly those produced in Taiwan regions that are viewed as pro-DPP; heightening scrutiny and destruction of Taiwan goods that fail to acknowledge Taiwan is part of China; restricting exports of certain goods, such as sand, to Taiwan; and reducing PRC tourism and students studying in Taiwan.<sup>54</sup> In 2021, China began targeting and threatening to punish Taiwan companies that support the DPP from operating in China.<sup>55</sup>

Militarily, Xi has increased day-to-day coercion of Taiwan and is transforming the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) into a military force more capable of launching significant military operations against Taiwan, if needed. The PLA began circumnavigating Taiwan in 2016, initiated nighttime sorties in 2018, refuted the existence of the Taiwan Strait centerline in 2020, and has since routinized the use of PLA centerline crossings as a signaling tool and it has normalized near-daily entry into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone (mainly in the southwest corner). In February 2022, a Chinese plane flew extremely close to Taiwan-administered Dongyin Island. China has engaged in aircraft carrier transits of the Taiwan Strait since 2013 and it has executed a growing number of large and live-fire exercises in the waters

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<sup>51</sup> “Taiwanese Urged To Assess Risks of Travel to China,” *Taipei Times*, August 8, 2022, at <https://taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2022/08/08/2003783172>

<sup>52</sup> Lin et al., “Competition in the Gray Zone,” p. 51.

<sup>53</sup> Qi Dongtao and Ryan Ho, “China’s Unilateral Preferential Policies for Taiwan (I): An Overview,” National University of Singapore, August 16, 2018, at <https://research.nus.edu.sg/eai/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/08/BB1378.pdf>; “Mainland Implements Measures to Benefit Taiwan Compatriots,” *Global Times*, December 26, 2019, at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/201912/1174842.shtml>

<sup>54</sup> Lin et al., “Competition in the Gray Zone,” pp. 48–52; “China Suspends Natural Sand Exports to Taiwan,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 2, 2022, at <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/nancy-pelosi-taiwan-visit-china-us-tensions/card/china-suspends-natural-sand-exports-to-taiwan-Jerk4q1MS8AcVryiBagi>.

<sup>55</sup> Eleanor Olcott, “Beijing Targets Taiwanese Companies With Operations in China,” *Financial Times*, November 28, 2021, at <https://www.ft.com/content/4a8515ae-69a0-4230-b7ca-329ebacd3936>

surrounding Taiwan.<sup>56</sup> In late 2015, Xi ordered sweeping reforms of the PLA, reorganizing the major military theaters as well as the existing military services and branches. These reforms seek to better position the PLA, particularly the Eastern Theater Command, to launch a major military operation against Taiwan and, if so called upon, to better deter or defeat potential third-party (U.S. or Japanese) intervention.<sup>57</sup>

Most significantly, in August 2022 China took unprecedented military exercises around Taiwan after U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan. These exercises involved not only air and maritime activity encircling and operating close to Taiwan. The PLA also fired nine missiles over Taiwan's main island, some of which flew over Taipei. These Chinese actions risk setting a dangerous "new normal" for more escalatory PLA activities near Taiwan.<sup>58</sup>

### **Conclusion: What remains the same?**

Given all these changes in PRC policy toward Taiwan, it is important to highlight that there remains substantial continuity between Xi's approach toward Taiwan and that of his predecessors. The most important continuity is that Xi has reiterated repeatedly that China's goal for Taiwan remains peaceful unification. Even though Taipei and the Taiwan public are unlikely to accept a 1C2S solution, Xi has not given up hope that China's growing absolute and relative power vis-à-vis Taiwan might allow Beijing to reshape the attitude and opinion of the Taiwan people over the longer term. This means that even though China's policy toward Taiwan has become bolder, more inflexible, and more coercive, Xi would prefer to never have to launch a PRC amphibious invasion of Taiwan.

A second and related continuity is that Xi Jinping has not given up efforts to "deepen cross-Strait developments as a basis for peaceful unification," despite growing pessimism in Beijing that this has much impact on Taiwan behavior.<sup>59</sup> Even as Beijing increasingly limits the DPP and what it views as other pro-independence forces in Taiwan from setting foot in China or doing business in China, the Chinese market is still open to Taiwan. China wants to use that market and its internal development – including advances in science and technology, education, public health, and other areas – to attract and inspire Taiwan people. It also means that Beijing continues to keep on the table proposals for an experimental or pilot joint development zone in Fujian

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<sup>56</sup> Lin et al., "Competition in the Gray Zone," pp. 52–59.

<sup>57</sup> Joel Wuthnow, "What Do China's Military Reforms Mean for Taiwan?" *Joint Force Quarterly*, October 2016, at <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1020037.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> Bonny Lin et al., "Tracking the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis (Updated August 19)," *China Power*, August 11, 2022, at <https://chinapower.csis.org/tracking-the-fourth-taiwan-strait-crisis/>

<sup>59</sup> "刘结一：在新时代新征程上奋力推进祖国统一进程" (Liu Jieyi: In the New Era and During the New Journey, Strive to Advance National Reunification), Taiwan Affairs Office, July 7, 2022.

province to explore new ways to integrate with Taiwan.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, China is pushing for more integration with Kinmen and Matsu, the two Taiwan islands that are located closer to China than they are to Taipei.

Moving forward, these major changes and continuities will likely persist during Xi's (likely) third term. China will mainly rely on its power to try to influence Taiwan public opinion and deter third countries from interfering in Taiwan-related issues. Beijing will embrace more coercive means if Taipei is not receptive to Chinese demands – or if Taipei will not agree to what it views as unacceptable PRC terms. The addition of China's unprecedented August 2022 military exercises to these developments paint a cross-Strait trajectory marked by more tensions and instabilities as China seeks to impose its will on the island.

### **About the Contributor**

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<sup>60</sup> “汪洋：郑成功收复台湾为两岸所敬仰” (Wang Yang: Zheng Chenggong's Recovery of Taiwan Is Admired By Both Sides of the Strait), *Huaxia*, July 14, 2022, at <https://www.huaxia.com/c/2022/07/14/1257663.shtml>