

# Taiwan's New Leader Faces China: A Powder Keg in the Pacific?

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POLICY  
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# Taiwan's New Leader Faces China: A Powder Keg in the Pacific?

Policy Brief

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A Policy Brief of the IPSC International Relations Research  
Program



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ISBN

## Taiwan's New Leader Faces China: A Powder Keg in the Pacific?

Navigating the complex geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific requires a nuanced understanding of the fragmented governance within Taiwan, the cautious maneuvering by Beijing, and President-elect Lai Ching-te's resolve against a possible Chinese invasion. The fragmented political system in Taiwan following the 2024 election has significant implications for domestic governance as well as interactions with China and the international community. President-elect Lai Ching-te's ability to navigate this landscape is crucial to shaping Taiwan's response to external pressures and maintaining stability in the region. While fragmented governance may pose challenges such as coalition governance, policy deadlocks, and potential political instability, it also presents opportunities for compromise and moderation. This eclectic or synthetic approach allows for a comprehensive analysis of the motivations, actions, and interactions of the actors involved in cross-strait relations, emphasizing the importance of understanding the complex dynamics and diverse perspectives on the Taiwan issue.

### Key Issues and Causal Factors:

This brief sets out to address four key issues:

- What approach will best analyse the outcome of the recent 2024 election in Taiwan and gain insights we do not already have?
- What actions are essential to avoid a major conflict?
- What can we now predict with greater certainty since we know the outcome of the 2024 election?
- How can we navigate predictions that influence the security of the Indo-Pacific?

### Key Findings

- The approach recommended in this paper involves looking beyond traditional measures of power and influence. It emphasizes understanding the non-material elements such as ideology, legitimacy, identity, and values, which are deeply intertwined with the material aspects of power and influence. This approach allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the motivations, actions, and interactions of the actors involved in the cross-strait relations, going beyond power politics.
- This paper provides strategic recommendations to avoid a major conflict, including engaging in open dialogue and diplomacy, focusing on building Taiwan's resilience, advocating for responsible leadership, and raising awareness to encourage informed analysis. These actions are essential to de-escalate tensions and find peaceful solutions, strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, hold all actors accountable for upholding international norms, and

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emphasize the importance of understanding the complex dynamics and diverse perspectives on the Taiwan issue.

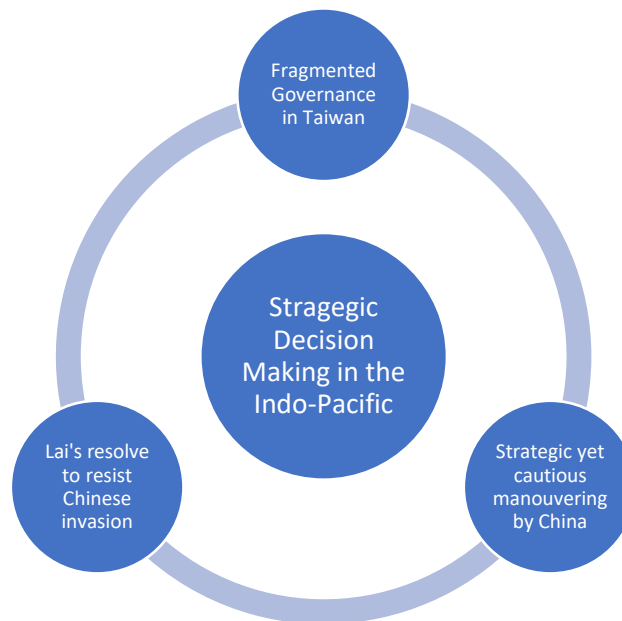
- Post election, we now know that the fragmented political system in Taiwan necessitates an imperative for negotiations between the executive and the legislature, to permit President-elect Lai Ching-te to successfully navigate this fragmented landscape, crucial in shaping Taiwan's response to external pressures and maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region, which could influence governance and interactions with China and the international community. The implications of a fragmented political system include potential challenges such as coalition governance, policy deadlocks, slow decision-making, political instability, and vulnerability to external influence. On the positive side, fragmentation can force parties to compromise and moderate their positions, potentially leading to more centrist and broadly acceptable policies, and can also increase representation of diverse interests and viewpoints in the political process. However, a note of caution to policy makers, the fragmented political system can complicate international relations, making it difficult for allies and adversaries to predict the government's actions or negotiate agreements.
- The paper suggests that navigating predictions that influence the security of the Indo-Pacific involves emphasizing the importance of understanding the complex dynamics and diverse perspectives on the Taiwan issue. This includes actively engaging with alternative viewpoints, promoting informed discussions, and supporting educational initiatives and media coverage that provide nuanced perspectives on the situation. Additionally, advocating for responsible leadership, holding all actors accountable for upholding international norms, and avoiding provocative actions that could lead to miscalculations or escalation are essential to navigate predictions and influence the security of the Indo-Pacific

### Overview of the 2024 Taiwan Election and its Geopolitical Significance

The interplay of geopolitics, domestic tensions, and cautious maneuvering by Beijing and Taiwan's President-elect Lai Ching-te is going to significantly influence decision-making and behavior of major actors in the Indo-Pacific region.

In this policy brief I have identified and explain three causal factors that will impact the decision-making and behavior of the major actors in the Indo-Pacific region. These include first the fragmented governance within Taiwan, second, Beijing's strategic yet cautious maneuvering, and finally, Lai Ching-te's resolve to resist and respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

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Those major decision makers include the US, China and Taiwan and major geopolitical alliances and partnerships play a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific that include the QUAD, ASEAN, as well as AUKUS, a strategic alignment among Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States to address shared security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region.

The fragmented governance within Taiwan, resulting from a political electoral process where no party has a majority, is going to necessitate compromise and negotiation between the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the Kuomintang (KMT), and the Taiwan People's Party (TPP). This will result in delayed decision-making and potential internal political instability. This domestic dynamic will affect Taiwan's foreign policy and its ability to respond effectively and quickly to external pressures.

Beijing's strategic yet cautious maneuvering aims to exploit perceived instability in Taiwan to exert more pressure, hoping to weaken resolve or promote internal divisions. This strategy involves both coercive measures and engagement with the DPP, testing or goading the new president into a provocation after his inauguration. China's actions, such as increased military activity around Taiwan following the election, are indicative of its response to the election outcome and its strategic approach to the region.

Lai Ching-te's resolve against a possible Chinese invasion and his commitment to developing Taiwan's economy and defense initiatives are also crucial factors. His victory may lead to a continuation of Taiwan's warming ties with the U.S., impacting the security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region. However, Lai's lack of an unfettered mandate to alter Taiwan's status, given the DPP's lack of a majority in the legislature, complicates governance and limits the potential for drastic policy shifts.

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The U.S. is likely to monitor the situation closely and offer more military or economic assistance to Taiwan regardless of whether instability or Chinese pressure grows. This could lead to increased regional cooperation with countries like Japan, Australia, and India to counter perceived Chinese aggression, although each country might prioritize its own national interests, leading to varying levels of engagement and support for Taiwan.

In summary, the complex interplay of geopolitics and domestic tensions, along with the cautious maneuvering by Beijing and Lai, creates a dynamic environment where causal factors and conditions influence the decision-making and behavior of major actors in the Indo-Pacific region.

### What the analysts said post-election

Three weeks after the dust has settled on Taiwan's 2024 election and analysts continue to suggest there is an elevated element of uncertainty floating unabated across the Indo-Pacific. Uncertainty, however, is a term that will forever, at least in my lifetime, describe the international system we inhabit, including the Indo-Pacific and the cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan.

Some commentators and analysts suggest the election of Taiwan's president-elect, Lai Ching-te will bring a [hawkish](#) shift in the cross-strait relations raising the specter of heightened tensions with China. Others were less concerned, suggesting it will be business as usual, arguing Beijing's response was [restrained](#) with a focus on downplaying the significance of the election and emphasizing the inevitability of unification.

In the midst of these antithetical viewpoints, I identify the key issues and explain the post-election causal factors that will influence the decision-making behaviour of actors in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Theoretical Framework: A complex interplay of geopolitics and domestic tensions

Beneath the surface of diplomatic positioning in the Indo-Pacific there lies a complex interplay of geopolitics and domestic tensions, and within this interplay there exist major *causal factors and conditions* that

#### Taiwan's MOFA response to false claims made by Russian Foreign Ministry following Taiwan's elections.

*The Republic of China (Taiwan) is a sovereign and independent country. Neither the R.O.C. (Taiwan) nor the People's Republic of China (PRC) is subordinate to the other. The PRC has never governed Taiwan—not even for a single day. This is an objective fact and the status quo. The people of Taiwan chose their next president in a fair, just, and open election on January 13. This democratic achievement has been recognized by countries worldwide.*

*The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) strongly condemns the same tired claims made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation regarding the so-called "one China principle," which are patently false and do not respect the free will of the Taiwanese people.*

*MOFA reiterates that Taiwan will never yield to pressure or diplomatic suppression from China's authoritarian government. Taiwan will continue to uphold the values of freedom and democracy, actively cooperating with diplomatic allies and like-minded countries to jointly safeguard global and regional peace and stability.*

Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China \(Taiwan\)](#)

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can influence the decision-making and behaviour of the major actors in the Indo-Pacific region.

These causal factors and or conditions include:

1. The fragmented governance within Taiwan.
2. The cautious maneuvering by Beijing to seize control of Taiwan and avoid a major conflict.
3. Taiwan's president-elect, Lai Ching-te's resolve against a Chinese invasion.

To analyse the international system, and interactions between states in the system, I identify and analyse these causal factors and processes that drive state decision-making behaviour, and how the underlying conditions can influence those processes.<sup>i</sup>

This approach allows more than just power politics to be considered and instead results in the formation of causal inferences to explain state decision-making behaviour and hypotheses ( explanations or predictions) of how states may decide in the future.

It is an approach that enables the development of a conceptual framework to analyse and hypothesize about the decision-making behaviour of states.

On a theoretical perspective, synthesising elements of neo-realism and constructivism provides an explanation that incorporates both power dynamics and the role of norms, ideas, and identity in shaping a state's decision-making behavior. This synthesis recognises that realist notions of power and material interests play a significant role in international relations, but constructivist notions of ideas, norms, and social constructions also influence state actions and outcomes.

### Synthesizing Neo-Realism and Constructivism for State Decision-Making Analysis

These non-material elements constitute critical factors in the analysis of cross-strait relations between the great power of China and in terms of power, the diminutive island state of Taiwan.<sup>ii iii</sup>

These non-material elements include ideological beliefs, political legitimacy, national identity, and the commitment to democratic values, all of which are deeply embedded in the societies and governance structures of both entities. I will briefly explain more about the non-material elements before we proceed further.

**Democratic Values:** Taiwan's commitment to democratic values and human rights contributes to its international standing and the support it receives from other democracies, despite the lack of formal diplomatic recognition due to China's One China Principle. These values also shape Taiwan's internal politics and its approach to cross-strait relations, as seen in the DPP's rhetoric and policies.



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**Ideological Beliefs and National Identity:** The ideological divide between China's one-party communist system and Taiwan's multi-party democratic system is a fundamental non-material factor. Taiwan's national identity has evolved separately from that of mainland China, with Taiwanese seeing themselves as distinct from the Chinese. This sense of identity reinforces Taiwan's resolve to maintain its de facto independence and democratic way of life, which is at odds with China's goal of unification under the One China Principle

**Public Opinion and the Right to Decide:** The belief among Taiwanese that only they have the right to decide their future is a powerful non-material factor that influences cross-strait relations.

**Coercive Strategies:** China's strategies often involve psychological elements, such as the use of propaganda and coercion to influence Taiwan's internal politics and to raise doubts about the value of democracy and the price of continued estrangement from the mainland. Beijing's cautious maneuvering, including military exercises and diplomatic isolation of Taiwan, aims to create a sense of inevitability regarding unification, affecting the behavior of Taiwanese officials and the electorate.

**Political Legitimacy:** The legitimacy of the ruling parties in both China and Taiwan is another critical non-material factor. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) derives its legitimacy from economic success and the promise of national rejuvenation, which includes the unification of Taiwan. Conversely, Taiwan's government gains legitimacy from its democratic processes and the protection of human rights and freedoms. The DPP's moderate approach to independence, emphasizing dialogue and peaceful relations while resisting Chinese pressure, reflects a balance between asserting Taiwan's sovereignty and maintaining stability.

**Soft Power and International Support:** Taiwan's soft power, derived from its technological advancements, cultural exports, and humanitarian assistance, contributes to its international image, and helps it garner support from other nations, despite diplomatic isolation. This soft power is a non-material asset that Taiwan leverages to maintain its de facto independence and to build informal alliances that can function as a counterbalance to China's hard power.

**Historical Narratives:** The historical narratives that each side promotes are non-material elements that shape the identity and policies of both China and Taiwan. China's narrative of historical unity and Taiwan's narrative of a distinct history both serve to justify their respective claims to sovereignty and influence the perceptions and actions of their populations.

**Commitment to Peace and Stability:** Both China and Taiwan express a commitment to peace and stability in the region, although their methods and definitions of peace differ. Taiwan's approach to maintaining peace involves



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strengthening its defense capabilities and seeking international support without provoking China, while China's approach includes demonstrating its military might to deter any thoughts of formal independence.

**International Norms and Rules:** The international norms and rules that govern state behavior, such as the United Nations Charter and principles of self-determination, are non-material factors that influence cross-strait relations. While these norms support the idea of self-determination, China's growing influence in international organizations often prevents their application to Taiwan's situation. Since 2001, China has [pressured 20 small states](#) to switch diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

In less than two days after the 2024 election, the Pacific Island nation of Nauru announced that it was severing diplomatic ties with Taiwan and establishing relations with the People's Republic of China.

**Psychological Warfare and Information Campaigns:** Both China and Taiwan engage in psychological warfare and information campaigns to influence public opinion and international perceptions. China's narrative of inevitable unification and Taiwan's emphasis on democratic values are part of this battle for hearts and minds, which can have a significant impact on cross-strait relations.

The psychological strategies employed by China, including the narrative of historical unity and the inevitability of unification, aim to influence Taiwanese public opinion and international perceptions. These strategies are part of a long game that Xi Jinping is playing, which involves exerting economic, military, and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan. The goal is to demonstrate to the Taiwanese people the cost of voting for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and to shape the new president's approach to cross-strait relations.

In summary, non-material elements such as ideology, legitimacy, identity, values, psychological strategies, public opinion, soft power, historical narratives, commitment to peace, and international norms are critical factors in the analysis of cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan. These elements shape the perceptions, policies, and actions of both sides, and they must be considered alongside material factors like military capabilities and economic interdependence to fully understand the complex dynamics at play in cross-strait relations.

**R.O.C. (Taiwan) government has terminated diplomatic relations with Republic of Nauru with immediate effect to uphold national dignity.**

*The government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) has learned that the Republic of Nauru, a diplomatic ally in the Pacific, will be terminating diplomatic relations with Taiwan on the grounds of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and the "one China principle."*

*China has long made efforts to approach prominent political figures in Nauru, offering economic assistance as incentive to persuade Nauru to switch diplomatic recognition...On October 30 after the new government assumed office, Taiwan promptly engaged Nauru regarding bilateral cooperation projects.*

*However, Nauru repeatedly demanded massive amounts of economic assistance from Taiwan and proceeded to compare Taiwan's aid proposals with those of China...lured by China's enticements and disregarding the long-term assistance and friendship from Taiwan, began negotiations with China on the establishment of diplomatic relations. Nauru has also deferred to China's "one China principle" and adopted false narratives.*

*Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China \(Taiwan\)](#)*

## Incorporating Non-Material Factors in Cross-Strait Relations

The non-material elements such as ideology, legitimacy, identity, and values are deeply intertwined with the material aspects of power and influence. For instance, Taiwan's commitment to democratic values and human rights not only shapes its internal politics but also affects its international relations and the support it receives from other democracies, despite the lack of formal diplomatic recognition due to China's One China Principle. This commitment is reflected in the government's approach to cross-strait relations, which emphasizes peace, stability, and the right of the Taiwanese public to decide their future.

The analysis of cross-strait relations between China and Taiwan requires a nuanced understanding that goes beyond traditional measures of power. It necessitates an approach that synthesizes realist theory with constructivist assumptions to explain state decision-making behavior, considering both material and non-material factors. This eclectic or synthetic approach allows for a nuanced and more comprehensive analysis of the motivations, actions, and interactions of the actors involved in the cross-strait relations.

In this paper we are going to focus on three causal factors: the fragmented governance of Taiwan; the maneuvering of Beijing post-election; and Lai Ching-te's resolve against a possible Chinese invasion.

## The Causal Factors explained.

### Fragmented Governance

In the case of Taiwan, the fragmented political system following the 2024 election may have significant implications for its domestic governance as well as its interactions with China and the broader international community. The ability of President-elect Lai Ching-te to navigate this fragmented landscape will be crucial in shaping Taiwan's response to external pressures and maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

This fragmentation often leads to a situation where coalition-building, compromise, and negotiation become necessary for governance and policymaking.

Implications of a fragmented political system include:

- *Coalition Governance*: Coalitions can lead to unstable or weak governments if the parties involved have significant ideological differences or conflicting priorities.

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- *Policy Deadlocks:* Fragmentation can result in legislative gridlock, where passing laws becomes challenging due to the lack of consensus among the diverse parties.
- *Slow Decision-Making:* The process of reaching agreements among multiple stakeholders can slow down decision-making, which may be detrimental in times of crisis or when swift action is required.
- *Political Instability:* A fragmented system may lead to frequent changes in government or shifts in policy direction, can create uncertainty, and undermine long-term planning.
- *Compromise and Moderation:* On the positive side, fragmentation can force parties to compromise and moderate their positions, potentially leading to more centrist and broadly acceptable policies.
- *Increased Representation:* A fragmented political landscape can also mean that a wider array of interests and viewpoints are represented in the political process, which can enhance democratic legitimacy.
- *Vulnerability to External Influence:* In the context of cross-strait relations, a fragmented political system in Taiwan could make it more vulnerable to pressure from Beijing, as internal divisions may be exploited to weaken Taiwan's position.
- *International Relations:* The lack of a clear and consistent policy direction can complicate international relations, as allies and adversaries may find it difficult to predict the government's actions or negotiate agreements.

The fragmented political system following the 2024 election may have significant implications for its domestic governance as well as its interactions with China and the broader international community. The ability of President-elect Lai Ching-te to navigate this fragmented landscape will be crucial in shaping Taiwan's response to external pressures and maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Domestic Dynamics within Taiwan

With eight seats, the TPP wields considerable influence, pushing for its own agenda, which could deviate from the DPP's or KMT's foreign policy goals.

### Strategic and cautious maneuvering by Beijing

#### *Cross-Strait Relations:*

China might exploit the perceived instability in Taiwan to exert more pressure, hoping to weaken resolve or promote internal divisions.

This could lead to:

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- *Increased pressure from China* could trigger reactions from Taiwan and its allies, escalating tensions in the region.
- *Changes in Taiwan's foreign policy* to counter Chinese pressure. Taiwan might seek closer ties with allies like the US, potentially impacting regional dynamics.

### *Regional Actors and International Relations:*

The US is likely to monitor the situation in Taiwan closely and potentially adjust its strategy depending on developments.

This could involve:

- *Increased support for Taiwan:* If instability or Chinese pressure grows, the US might offer Taiwan more military or economic assistance.
- *Engagement with China:* The US might attempt diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and maintain regional stability.

Regional actors including Japan, Australia, and India will also closely watch developments and adjust their policies based on perceived stability and potential threats.

This could lead to

- *Increased regional cooperation:* These countries might collaborate with each other and the US to counter any perceived Chinese aggression.
- *Differing approaches:* Each country might prioritize its own national interests, leading to varying levels of engagement and support for Taiwan.

### Lai Ching-te's resolve against a possible Chinese invasion.

- President-elect Lai will continue his path of developing Taiwan's economy and fostering an environment of peace, a path that safeguards the nation's sovereignty, protects its freedom, democracy, and human rights, and respects the public's right to decide Taiwan's future.
- Lai's administration is anticipated to support Taiwan's [semiconductor industry](#), a key economic driver, by fostering talent and enacting policies favorable to the industry. Lai has expressed his aim for an average [annual](#)

## Who is Lai Ching-te?

*Lai Ching-te, Taiwan's president-elect, is a kidney doctor-turned-DPP politician. He once described himself as "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence," which raised questions in the US whether Lai could navigate the cross-strait relations, maintain peace and stability.*

*But Lai has since moderated his stance and promised to maintain the status quo. He wrote "my commitment to defending peace, our democratic achievements and the cross-strait status quo is stronger than ever."*

*As recently as August 2023, Lai was quoted as saying about China:*

*We don't want to be enemies; we can be friends. And we would love to see China enjoy democracy and freedom—just like us. As long as there is parity and dignity, our door is always open. We are willing to cooperate with China to advance peace and prosperity. However, until China renounces the use of force against Taiwan, we must strengthen our military capacity and stand shoulder to shoulder with democracies to effectively deter the threats from China and secure stability in the Indo-Pacific region.*

*He claims his responsibility is "to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, while protecting Taiwan and maintaining democracy, peace, and prosperity...We must work to maintain the peaceful status quo, because Taiwan is already a sovereign country."*

*Lai Ching-te has pledged not to pursue formal independence, indicating a commitment to maintaining the current situation. He is quoted as saying "Taiwan is already a sovereign, independent country called the Republic of China. It is not part of the People's Republic of China. The ROC and PRC are not subordinate to one another. It is not necessary to declare*

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[GDP growth of 3.5%](#) if elected, demonstrating a focus on economic development.

- Lai has signaled his desire for Taiwan to join the [U.S.-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#), emphasizing the island's key role in the global economy.
- Lai's approach to Taiwan's independence is characterized by a focus on maintaining the existing cross-strait status quo, defending Taiwan's sovereignty, and managing relations with China.
- Lai holds a moderate approach to Taiwan's independence based on three foundational principles:
  - a) **Maintaining the [Status Quo](#)**: Lai has vowed to maintain the status quo and defend peace, democratic achievements, and the cross-strait status quo.
  - b) **Taiwan is a [distinct sovereignty](#), an independent nation and therefore does not need to declare independence**. Only Taiwan's 23 million people have the right to decide Taiwan's future. Building up Taiwan and making it stronger and more attractive to people so that they support it is a practical approach to Taiwanese independence.
  - c) Lai has [pledged](#) not to pursue formal independence, indicating a commitment to maintaining the current situation. He is [quoted](#) as saying "Taiwan is already a sovereign, independent country called the Republic of China. It is not part of the People's Republic of China. The ROC and PRC are not subordinate to one another. It is not necessary to declare independence."
- At the party level, consistently, the DPP positions itself as a moderate alternative to the KMT, an approach that resonates with many Taiwanese who desire self-determination but also prioritize stability and economic ties with China. The DPP uses rhetoric to emphasize a balanced approach towards China, advocating for maintaining dialogue and peaceful relations while simultaneously resisting Chinese pressure and threats. This can be seen as avoiding direct confrontation while still pursuing Taiwan's self-determination and, at the same time, bolstering Taiwan's self-defense capabilities through asymmetric warfare strategies and strengthening deterrence without seeking to match China's military might directly.

## Analysis

### The Long Game of Xi Jinping

The U.S.-China-Taiwan triangle has been playing an exceptionally long game, since the 1940s. No one else is coming close to the long game being played by PRC President, Xi Jinping.

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- Xi Jinping's is repeatedly, and monotonously, maintaining the narrative that unification with Taiwan is a "historic inevitability".
- Xi's long-game involves exerting additional economic, military, and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan to demonstrate to the Taiwanese people that there is a price for continuing to vote the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) into power and to attempt to shape the new president's approach to cross-strait relations.
- Xi's play book includes using a variation of the same strategy that China has used for years, which involves using both carrots and sticks to make Taiwan ungovernable and to raise doubts within Taiwan as to the value of democracy and the price of continued estrangement.
- It involves engaging with the DPP and attempting to test or goad the new president into a provocation after his inauguration, with the aim of forcing the president into making a mistake or frustrating him into making a rash move, which China can then paint as provocative and seek international agreement on

### Next moves for China, the US, and Taiwan?

- Does China see the election outcome as producing tension in the near term because China sees this scenario as most threatening to its interests?
- Will China increase its pressure on Taiwan even further through a variety of coercive military and economic tools?
- Will Washington alter its approach to U.S.-Taiwan relations?

We can expect it to be business as usual for the U.S.-China-Taiwan triangle.

- Washington will continue its long-term support for Taiwan's independence but fall short of supporting any claim for sovereignty.
- Taiwan will concentrate on its economy, domestic affairs, and military defense.
- Beijing will wait for an opportunity to seize control of Taiwan and avoid a major conflict.

### Strategic recommendations:

**1. Engage in open dialogue and diplomacy:** Encourage all parties involved (US, China, Taiwan) to prioritize open communication and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and find peaceful solutions. This could involve advocating for:

- **Direct conversations between US and Chinese officials:** To address underlying concerns and explore diplomatic solutions.
- **Cross-strait talks led by Taiwan and China:** To discuss peaceful co-existence and mutual respect.

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- **International forums and mediation:** To involve the international community in facilitating dialogue and peaceful resolutions.

**2. Focus on building Taiwan's resilience:** Urge support for initiatives that strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities, economic independence, and democratic institutions. This could include:

- **Increased international cooperation and arms sales to Taiwan:** To enhance its ability to deter or respond to potential aggression.
- **Investment in economic diversification and innovation:** To reduce dependence on China and strengthen Taiwan's economic self-sufficiency.
- Promoting international recognition of Taiwan's democratic values and human rights: To bolster its legitimacy and international standing.

**3. Advocate for responsible leadership:** Hold all actors accountable for upholding international norms and avoiding provocative actions that could lead to miscalculations or escalation. This could involve:

- Calling on China to avoid coercive measures and military threats against Taiwan.
- Pressing the US to balance its commitment to Taiwan with efforts to de-escalate tensions with China.
- Encouraging Taiwan to responsibly manage its defense initiatives and avoid actions perceived as overly provocative.

**4. Raise awareness and encourage informed analysis:** Emphasize the importance of understanding the complex dynamics and diverse perspectives on the Taiwan issue. This could involve:

- Sharing information and analysis from multiple sources to avoid oversimplification or bias.
- Actively engaging with alternative viewpoints and promoting informed discussions.
- Supporting educational initiatives and media coverage that provide nuanced perspectives on the situation.

## What was the election outcome?

In case you missed it, Taiwan's 2024 election was the victory of DPP presidential candidate Lai Ching-te, who won with 40.05% of the vote in a three-person race. The Kuomintang (KMT) won fifty-two seats, and the DPP won fifty-one seats in the legislature, resulting in a fragmented political system.

The DPP's lack of a majority in the legislature means that governance will be complicated, requiring negotiations between the executive and the legislature and



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among the parties in the legislature. Lai's victory does not provide an unfettered mandate to alter Taiwan's status, and his political party is not positioned to deliver such an outcome.

The immediate response by Beijing was to increase Chinese military activity: Taiwan's defense ministry detected 18 Chinese air force planes conducting "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships around Taiwan following the election. The election of Lai Ching-te as Taiwan's next president has implications for the balance of power in the region. Lai's victory may lead to a continuation of Taiwan's warming ties with the U.S., which could impact the security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region.

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i This approach is described an eclectic or synthetic approach because it synthesizes realist theory with constructivist assumption to explain state decision-making behaviour.

ii Note the distinction between the OCP and the "One China" policy. The latter was a diplomatic approach formulated by the United States in 1972 and officially recognizes the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China, acknowledging that Taiwan is part of China, but avoids taking a stance on the ultimate resolution of Taiwan's status. The One China Principle is a core belief of the People's Republic of China (PRC) views Taiwan as an inseparable part of Chinese territory and considers any move towards Taiwanese independence as illegal and unacceptable.

iii For all intents and purposes, even though most states don't formally recognise Taiwan due to China's One China Principle (OCP), and the bullying, coercion, and retribution that accompanies the OCP, Taiwan behaves as an independent sovereign state.