

## **US CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS SALES TO TAIWAN: CHINA'S RESPONSE SINCE 1979**

Mohammad Morad Hossain Khan \*

### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to examine how the United States maintains security relationship with Taiwan against any perceived Chinese military threats. Taiwan, which is separated and thus politically divided from mainland China in 1949, is created by the history of a long civil war from roughly 1937 to 1949. The US maintained state to state relationship with Taiwan till 1979 though in 1971 the US recognized that Taiwan was the part of China. It is to be noted that the US reconciled major disputes with China on the condition that the case of Taiwan must be handled peacefully. China cannot force Taiwan for reunification against its will. From the Taiwanese point of view, Taiwan is a sovereign state. She is struggling to enhance her military capability with the help of the US from the inception of the problem. That is why whenever China threatens to capture Taiwan, the US comes forward with its military might according to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979. It will be interesting to note how the US sustains arms cooperation with Taiwan since the US does not maintain any formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan since 1979. In this regard, Chinese response to the US-Taiwan security relationship in terms of conventional weapons sales will be observed since 1979. On the one hand, Taiwan is a democratic and capitalist state which has diplomatic relations with few states. China, which is still a politically communist country, is growing as a major economic power as well as a military power in the contemporary world, on the other. From the hegemonic stability point and also political realistic point of views, the US simply wants to continue current status-quo in the Asia-Pacific region to curb China's emergence as a possible superpower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this study, why and how the US provides arms, especially conventional weaponries to Taiwan and China's response to it will mainly be discussed.

### **Introduction**

Taiwan, which is separated and thus politically divided from mainland China in 1949, was created by the history of a long civil war from roughly 1937 to 1949.<sup>1</sup>

---

\* Assistant Professor of History, Department of General Education, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), Dhaka

<sup>1</sup> Dittmer, Lowell, "The Evolution of China's Policy Towards Taiwan" in J.W. Wheeler (ed.), *China Divide: Evolving Relations Between Taiwan and Mainland China*, Washington: Hudson Institute, 1996, p. 38

Since 1950, especially from the Korean War (1950-1953), the question of Taiwan has been the most complicated issue between the United States (hereafter the US) and the People's Republic of China.<sup>2</sup> But since 1971 the US-Taiwan relationship took a different turn when the US declared "One China Policy" and considered Taiwan as the part of China.<sup>3</sup> Earlier the United States formally maintained state to state relationship with Taiwan while it was known as the Republic of China from 1949 to 1979 though in 1971 the US declared to establish diplomatic relations with China. Diplomatically, the US sets a condition to China that the case of Taiwan must be handled peacefully. That means the US will intervene militarily, if China tries to capture or integrate Taiwan against its will. But realistically or emotionally, is Taiwan ever ready to be the part of China?

The US realistically signed the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954 with Taiwan. Thus, the US has never allowed the Chinese intervention into Taiwan though China often threatens to use military forces against Taiwanese unilateral declaration of independence or long term separation from China. But the situation of the Taiwan case changed dramatically when the US came forward to reconcile disputes with China through Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 from the Cold War perspective against the former Soviet Union-India alliance. According to Lowell Dittmer, "Since Beijing took over Taipei's UN seat in 1971, Taiwan has suffered one blow after another".<sup>4</sup> But still the US remains as the key security guarantor to Taiwan against any possible Chinese military action into Taiwan. But from the Chinese point of view, Taiwan is her integral part and Taiwan is being separated from China for the time-being.

This paper, on the one hand, deals with why and how the US maintains security relationship with Taiwan- after snapping diplomatic relations and provides different kinds of arms, especially conventional weapons to Taiwan since 1979 to date as well as how the US started maintaining 'One China policy' on the other. The analysis will be based on some government documents, acts and statements of the US, Taiwan and China. The year 1979 is an important turning

---

<sup>2</sup> Chiu, Hungdah, "China, the United States, and the Question of Taiwan" in Hungdah Chiu (ed.), *China and the Question of Taiwan: Documents and Analysis*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973, p. 112

<sup>3</sup> Roy, Denny, *Taiwan: A Political History*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 139

<sup>4</sup> Dittmer, *Op. cit.* p. 44

point for both Taiwan and China since the US officially disconnected diplomatic relations with Taiwan. And in the same year the US established diplomatic relations with China. Despite the fact that the US continues selling conventional weapons to Taiwan as she did before. How this is taking place will be analyzed using Hegemonic Stability Theory and Political Realism in this paper. Usually, conventional weapons mean small weapons like assault rifles, land-mines, tanks, bombs, shells, rockets, missiles, war planes and so on.

### **Background of the US Arms Sales to Taiwan and China's Reaction**

The Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 (the TRA) is the foundation of selling US conventional weapons to Taiwan. The Act was approved in the US Congress on April 10 in 1979.<sup>5</sup> The reason is that through the TRA, the US maintains and takes all sorts of security measures including arms sales to Taiwan against any Chinese military threat.<sup>6</sup> According to the Section 2 (5) of the Act, the US is “to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character”.<sup>7</sup> The next section 3 (a) of the Taiwan Relations Act made it more clear: “...the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capacity”.<sup>8</sup>

By this law, the US President and the Congress will take decision about the nature and quantity of arms necessary for the defense of Taiwan in time.<sup>9</sup> But earlier, the Mutual Defense Treaty between the US and the ROC or Taiwan acted well so far against any outside threat. According to the Article 7 of the Mutual Defense Treaty, Taiwan allowed its land, air and sea for the military purpose of the US.<sup>10</sup>

Immediately after the promulgation of the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979, China sharply reacted to it. China questioned the military assistance to a state like

---

<sup>5</sup> US-China Institute, *Taiwan Relations Act*, University of Southern California, 2007 (<http://china.usc.edu/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=393&AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>)

<sup>6</sup> Kan, Shirley A., Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990, *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress*, 2010, p. 1. (<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RL30957.pdf>)

<sup>7</sup> US-China Institute, *Taiwan Relations Act, Op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Treaty Series (reg. no. 3496), *Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of China*, USA, 1958, pp. 214-216. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/mutual01.htm>)

Taiwan, which has no formal relations with the US.<sup>11</sup> Historical documents show that, “On March 16, 1979, three days after the Bill passed in both Houses of the Congress, Foreign Minister Huang Hua of China informed U.S. Ambassador Leonard Woodcock that the situation was ‘unacceptable to the Chinese Government’.”<sup>12</sup> According to the law, the US Government would sell arms as much as Taiwan needs for her national security and self-defense.<sup>13</sup> But the security situation of Taiwan more or less remained same to the US and Taiwan. Even though reservation were raised less China the US approved the sale of arms and ammunitions to Taiwan. The US sold Taiwan \$ 800 million worth of arms immediately after the TRA in the beginning of 1980.<sup>14</sup> Chinese Government reacted seriously against the Dutch Government on arms sale to Taiwan in 1981 and also criticized France on the same issue; but China could do almost nothing against the superpower, the US arms sales like advanced fighters in 1992 and later on.<sup>15</sup> However, Taiwan mainly depends on arms sales from the US against China’s huge numerical advantages in manpower and weapons systems.<sup>16</sup> From the Cold War Perspective, the US made friendly relations with China. And for the Chinese cause, the US had to maintain compromise but realistic diplomacy at that time. That is why according to the Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China in August in 1982, the US agreed the following:

... the United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends gradually to reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time, to a final resolution.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Dittmer, *Op. cit.*, p. 33

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Dumbaugh, Kerry, “Taiwan-U.S. Relations: Recent Developments and Their Policy Implications”, *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress*, 2008, p. 20. (<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/112057.pdf>)

<sup>14</sup> Dittmer, *Op. cit.*, p. 33

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pp. 40-41.

<sup>16</sup> Roy, Denny, “Taiwan’s Response to the Rise of China” in Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), *The Rise of China and International Security*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 128

<sup>17</sup> United States Information Service, *Joint Communiqué on Arms Sales to Taiwan between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, USA, 17 August 1982. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communique03.htm>)

But the ‘Six Assurances to Taiwan’ made by the US former Ambassador John Holdridge consolidated the position of Taiwan well.<sup>18</sup> The most important assurance to Taiwan is that the US would not alter the terms of the TRA and the US would not set any date for the termination of arms sales to Taiwan.<sup>19</sup> It continues, “The United States would not consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan”.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the US-Taiwan security cooperation continues to vitiate US-China relations. Taiwan started building its own defense industry gradually and effectively. In the 1980s Taiwan used to spend more than 30 per cent of the national budget in defense purpose, “despite a cutback in the number of members of the armed forces from 600,000 in the early 1950s to 400,000 by 1989”.<sup>21</sup>

The Chinese missile tests and nuclear threat during 1995 and 1996 proved that the US was committed to perform according to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 since the US stood by Taiwan with all sorts of necessary means including adequate military deployment in the Taiwan Strait. After the 1995-96 crisis, the US increased its arms sale to Taiwan and enhanced military ties — “in order to maintain a military balance of power between the two sides” of the Taiwan Strait.<sup>22</sup> But Chinese officials calculated that the US would not intervene in the Taiwan Strait confrontation from the US experience in Somalia, Bosnia and Haiti.<sup>23</sup> But when the US deployed two aircraft carriers into the Taiwan Strait, China was shocked because the US deployed naval forces which had the capability to destroy virtually the entire naval forces of China swiftly and with virtual impunity.<sup>24</sup> Certainly, China was aware of that reality. So, China did not start any military campaign to occupy Taiwan at all.<sup>25</sup>

Strategically, China is also taking time to be well-prepared to cope with the US and Taiwan at the same time in terms of military power, capability and so on.

---

<sup>18</sup> Six Assurances, *The "Six Assurances" to Taiwan*, July 1982. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/assurances.htm>)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Dittmer, *Op. cit.*, p. 41

<sup>22</sup> Changhe, Su, The role of the United States in cross-strait negotiations: a mainland Chinese perspective in Bercovitch, Jacob *et al.* (eds.), *Conflict Management, Security and Intervention in East Asia*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 223

<sup>23</sup> Garver, John W., *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization*, Washington: University of Washington Press, 1997, p. 114

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 117

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

By January 2007, China succeeded in testing its anti-satellite weapons by destroying old Chinese weather satellite in the space.<sup>26</sup> This incident indicates that China is continuing its modernization of its military capability, which appears alarming for the US and its allies.<sup>27</sup> It is mentionable that China is the third country after the US and former Soviet Union to have that capability in the world.<sup>28</sup> China has been preparing herself for a long time so that she could challenge the US militarily over 100 years at best.<sup>29</sup> In this perspective, the US-Taiwan security relationship in terms of conventional arms cooperation will be enhanced to a great extent.

### US – Taiwan Military Cooperation

In July 1982, the Reagan administration gave six guarantees to Taiwan. The first two guarantees are very significant: the US has not set a specific date for ending arms sales to Taiwan, and the US has not agreed to consult with China on arms sales to Taiwan.<sup>30</sup> Through the six guarantees, it was also assured that the TRA of 1979, the US pillar of political and security commitment to Taiwan, would not be revised and the sovereignty of Taiwan would remain same.<sup>31</sup> In 1992 the Bush administration agreed to sell sophisticated weapons like 150 F-16 fighters and 4 E-2T AWACS to Taiwan.<sup>32</sup> Taiwan co-produces F5-E fighter aircraft for its air defense.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Goh, Evelyn, “US strategic relations with a rising China: Trajectories and impacts on Asia-Pacific security” in Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 82

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Cooney, Kevin J, “Chinese-American hegemonic competition in East Asia: a new cold war or into the arms of America” in Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 43-44

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p. 45

<sup>30</sup> Chen, Edward I-hsin, The Role of the United States in cross-strait negotiations: A Taiwanese perspective in Bercovitch, Jacob et al (eds.), *Conflict Management, Security and Intervention in East Asia*, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 197

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 200; Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization*, Op. cit., pp. 35; Changhe, The role of the United States in cross-strait negotiations: a mainland Chinese perspective in Bercovitch, Jacob et al. (eds.), *Conflict Management, Security and Intervention in East Asia*, Op.cit. p. 225

<sup>33</sup> Clough, Ralph N., “U.S. Policy Toward Evolving Taiwan-Mainland China Relations” in J.W. Wheeler (ed.), *China Divide: Evolving Relations Between Taiwan and Mainland China*, Washington: Hudson Institute, 1996, p. 105

In the modern warfare, air power including missile is a decisive factor to all powers. The case of Taiwanese security is of no exception. With the help of the US air power over years, Taiwan has built a strong air power capability of international standard.<sup>34</sup> The importance of air power can be easily perceived as the 70 per cent surface of the globe is covered by water while 100 per cent is by air.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, Taiwan is quite aware of the importance of the advanced military power with its all-out consequences.

Chinese missile threats to Taiwan in 1995 and 1996 made Taiwan more tensed about her over all security. As a result, Taiwan increased its defense budgets.<sup>36</sup> During this missile tests crisis, the US declared to have approved the sale of Stringent antiaircraft missiles to Taiwan in defense of Taiwan from China.<sup>37</sup> Immediately the US also announced to sell US Patriot antimissiles to Taiwan for better security of Taiwan from any possible Chinese missile attacks.<sup>38</sup>

But a Chinese spokesman for Taiwan Affairs Office of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee made comments on Xinhua News Agency three months later of the Chinese missile tests crisis that China demonstrated her full determination and capability to safeguard Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity through the missile tests.<sup>39</sup> But the reality is that Taiwan and the US became more aware of the Chinese strength. And thus, Taiwan developed its own military through the purchase of more sophisticated conventional weapons and technology from the US.

From worldwide sources, including the United States, Taiwan received arms deliveries valued at \$7.7 billion in the eight-year period from 2001 to 2008. Taiwan ranked 7th among leading arms recipients among the developing countries.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, in the same period China spent \$ 16.2 billion, ranking 2nd arms buyer in the world. After the Chinese missile threats, the US increased overall military communication and assistance towards Taiwan

---

<sup>34</sup> Edmonds, Martin, Air Power and Taiwan's Security in Martin Edmonds and Michael M. Tsai (eds.), *Taiwan's Security And Air Power: Taiwan's Defense Against The Air Threat From Mainland China*, New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004, p. 25

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 13

<sup>36</sup> Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization*, *Op. cit.* p. 154

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 155

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Kan, Shirley A., *Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990*, *Op. cit.*, p. 2

unprecedentedly since 1979 in every possible means less like designing providing ensuing strategy, training, logistics, establishing control and command.<sup>41</sup> According to Shirley Kan, “After the U.S. approval in 1992, Taiwan in 1997 acquired three Patriot missile defense fire units with PAC-2 Guidance Enhanced Missiles”.<sup>42</sup> Taiwan bought the U.S. Navy’s four available Kidd-class destroyers, costing \$ 875 million, which are the largest warships in Taiwan’s navy and which are equipped with SM-2 air-defense missiles and a joint combat management system in 2005 and 2006.<sup>43</sup>

In addition, in recent time, Taiwan purchased 60 Black Hawk helicopters from the US after a long discussion and negotiations. In January 2010, the US President Barack Obama notified the US Congress of ‘a sale of the helicopters for \$3.1 billion’.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Taiwan and the US are going on their security measures against any perceived Chinese threat towards Taiwan. China continuously protests against any sort of arms sales to Taiwan by the US or any other parties.

According to the TRA, the US assists Taiwan in terms of security through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) from 1979 to till today. The AIT like embassy provides almost everything Taiwan needs. To some extent, the AIT is stronger than any embassy. The reason is evident according to the TRA:

The absence of diplomatic relations or recognition shall not affect the application of the laws of the United States with respect to Taiwan, and the laws of the United States shall apply with respect to Taiwan in the manner that the laws of the United States applied with respect to Taiwan prior to January 1, 1979.<sup>45</sup>

The US Secretary of State is responsible to convey any agreement made by the institute. That means the AIT is a strongly effective body to represent the US stand on Taiwan. “The U.S. and Taiwan militaries set up a hotline in 2002 to deal with possible crises”,<sup>46</sup> “...the Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Michael Wynne, submitted a letter to Congress on August 29, 2003, that designated Taiwan as a “major non-NATO ally”.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, Taiwan, being the non-NATO ally, felt much more secured as

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 9

<sup>45</sup> US-China Institute, *Taiwan Relations Act, Op. cit.*, section 4.

<sup>46</sup> Kan, Shirley A., *Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990, Op. cit.*, p. 4

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is the strongest transnational military organization in the world.

But Taiwan has not stopped to continue enhancement of its military power. In 2007, Taiwanese Defense Minister Lee Jye confirmed that Taiwan was developing missiles with a range up to 1000 km that could attack Chinese missile bases inside China.<sup>48</sup> Stephen Young, director of the American Institute in Taiwan, explained quickly by saying that the focus would be defensive, not offensive in nature.<sup>49</sup> That means there might be close cooperation between the US and Taiwan regarding the missile building of Taiwan as well.

### **China's Recent Activities**

China always criticizes the US-Taiwan military cooperation. China feels that any military cooperation between Taiwan and the US is contrary to its. That is national interest why China simply and continuously tries to keep the US far from Taiwan.<sup>50</sup> Since 1990s China has been modernizing its military forces and thus China is increasing its military capacity to defend the US aircraft carriers at a long distance using anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM).<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, China deployed anti-cruise missile on its ship with the help of Russia and thus China has also developed "modern Russian fighter-bombers equipped with anti-ship missiles".<sup>52</sup> Against this backdrop, the western countries like the US tried to establish "China threat theory"<sup>53</sup> to the world. By this time, China has developed the largest military numbering 2,225,000 active-duty personnel with about 800,000 in reserve.<sup>54</sup> In this perspective, the US sells arms to Taiwan so that Taiwan and China remain separated for an indefinite

---

<sup>48</sup> Roy, "Taiwan's Response to the Rise of China" in Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), *The Rise of China and International Security*, *Op. cit.*, p. 129

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Schroeter, Thilo *et al*, Challenging US Command of the Commons: Evolving Chinese defense technologies as a threat to American hegemony? *Bologna Center Journal of International Affairs*, 2010, p. 45. ([http://bcjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/schroeter-sollenberger-verink-from-bcjia-mag\\_final-3.pdf](http://bcjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/schroeter-sollenberger-verink-from-bcjia-mag_final-3.pdf)).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 46

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Yang, Jian, "The Rise of China: Chinese Perspectives" in Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 13

<sup>54</sup> IISS 2005 in Kay, Sean, "Global Security" in Michael T Snarr & D. Neil Snarr (eds.), *Introducing Global issues*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, *Boulder (US)*: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2008, p. 78

period of time.<sup>55</sup> According to the Chinese anti-China force like the US has been relentlessly try to divide and contain China using different machination.<sup>56</sup>

### US Recent Involvement

In 2011, the Congressional Research Service Report clearly revealed that Taiwan was the leading US arms purchaser during the period 2007-2010. In this period, Taiwan bought the US defense articles and services worth of \$6.6 billion. Even in 2010 among the worldwide purchasers of US defense articles and services, Taiwan was also at the top costing \$ 2.7 billion.<sup>57</sup>

There are some reasons why the US supports Taiwan against China. Firstly, American people believe in democracy and freedom of choice which their government or political parties cannot ignore at all. The US has played a pivotal role in building Taiwan's democratic system which is often called as a model for Asia.<sup>58</sup>

If the US decides to reduce arms cooperation with Taiwan, its allies globally and regionally will undermine the US as no more to be trusted one.<sup>59</sup> Some East Asian allies like Japan, South Korea, Singapore and the Philippines are very dependent on the US for overall security for a long time. Particularly, Japan which is a very significant strategic US global partner will be shocked at and Japan may doubt the US's reliability. Other countries may also follow Japan in this regard.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the political image of the US would be endangered globally and regionally. Realistically, the US cannot do that. "...30 senators reminded Obama that 'Taiwan is one of our strongest allies in Asia' ".<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, the US defense industry earns a huge amount of money every year from Taiwan by selling arms and defense services.<sup>62</sup> For example, in 2011, a

---

<sup>55</sup> Yang, "The Rise of China: Chinese Perspectives" in Kevin J. Cooney and Yoichiro Sato (eds.), *The Rise of China and International Security: America and Asia Respond*, *Op. cit.*, p. 21

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Grimmett, Richard F., "U.S. Arms Sales: Agreements with and Deliveries to Major Clients, 2003-2010", *Congressional Research Service*, 2011 (December 16), p. 2-3. (<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/179578.pdf>).

<sup>58</sup> Tucker, Nancy Bernkopf and Glaser, Bonnie, Should the United States Abandon Taiwan? *The Washington Quarterly*, 2011 (Fall), p. 34. ([http://csis.org/files/publication/twq11\\_autumntuckerglaser.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/twq11_autumntuckerglaser.pdf)).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32-33

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26

bipartisan group of 45 US Senators advocated arms sales to Taiwan since Lockheed Martin's f-16 production would shut down without order from Taiwan. And this shut down would cause the loss of 11,000 jobs in 43 states in the US.<sup>63</sup> It is observed that, "Taiwan is the ninth largest trading partner of the United States, and the United States is Taiwan's third largest, with two-way trade rising 32 percent in 2010. The United States is the largest foreign investor in Taiwan".<sup>64</sup> That is why the Obama administration in its first two years (2009-2010) sold almost \$13 billion worth of weapons to Taiwan.<sup>65</sup> The US under the Obama administration also provided 60 UH-60M Blackhawk helicopters to Taiwan, and in 2011 sold the Patriot (PAC-3) air defense system for \$2 billion.<sup>66</sup> Cabestan also mentioned that since 2008 the Obama administration committed more conventional arms sales to Taiwan than the Bush administration in the previous seven years (\$18.3 billion and \$ 12.25 billion respectively).<sup>67</sup> That means the US not only continues selling weapons to Taiwan but also will deploy more soldiers to the Asia-Pacific region in future.

Since the Shangri La Strategic Dialogue in Singapore in June 2012, the US started refocusing on Asia-Pacific. In her 'rebalancing project' presented by the US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, the US would deploy more warships and armed forces to the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>68</sup> The Defense Minister of Taiwan publicly welcomed the US decision.<sup>69</sup>

### Analysis

Though the US does not maintain any formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the TRA clearly states that the US will provide arms and defense services as much as Taiwan needs (Section 2 of the Taiwan Relations Act). That means the US has already sided with Taiwan in terms of its overall security strongly from the political realistic point of view. From the hegemonic stability point of view,

---

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 26

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 31-32

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p. 34

<sup>66</sup> Grimmett, Richard F. & Kerr, Paul K, "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2004-2011", *Congressional Research Service*, 2012 (August), p. 15. (<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/R42678.pdf>).

<sup>67</sup> Cabestan, Jean-Pierre, "Taiwan's Changing Security Environment", *Berlin: German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, 2012, p. 5. ([http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt\\_papiere/Jean-PierreCabestan\\_Shanghai2012\\_web.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/projekt_papiere/Jean-PierreCabestan_Shanghai2012_web.pdf)).

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p.14

the US intends to contain China for an indefinite period of time. Viewed realistically Taiwan maintains good relations with the US for its statehood through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) since 1979.

From the Chinese point of view, the question of Taiwan is an internal issue of China. Any US arms sale to Taiwan is against the will or national interest of China. But from the Taiwanese point of view, the Taiwan case is totally different than China's point of view. Taiwan simply wants to survive, that Taiwan has been enjoying since 1949, with the cooperation of the US in particular based on security relationship though the US arms sales like conventional weapons to Taiwan which has been a debating issue between the US and China.

Strategically, the US prefers the peaceful resolution of the conflict between China and Taiwan. Absence of peace between China and Taiwan is against the interests of the US in the Asia-Pacific region (Section 2 of the Taiwan Relations Act). The US believes that Taiwan has rights to defend herself from any Chinese threat. To the Taiwanese, their sovereignty and identity are non-negotiables. Taiwan is never ready to sacrifice its statehood. That is why Taiwan needs to maintain very realistic relations with the US. And for that reason the US from time to time provides different conventional weapons to Taiwan for her defense.

In the strategically post Cold War era, the US termed Taiwan as an important non-NATO ally, which is also very significant. The US recognition to Taiwan as a non-NATO ally acts as a safeguards to the Taiwanese sovereignty, security and national glory indeed. In that sense Taiwan like other NATO member states expects more military cooperation from the US. Thus, Taiwan becomes more dependent on the US for conventional weapons as well. According to US point of view, arms sales to Taiwan are + two prime objectives: one for containing China and another + Taiwan capable so that the US does not need to send huge armed forces to ward off China.<sup>70</sup>

So, it does not matter much whether there is formal diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan or not. The relationship between the US and Taiwan exists de facto through the TRA. The US declared disconnection of

---

<sup>70</sup> Black, Sam, "Arms Sales to Taiwan: A Means to What End?", *Center For Defense Information*, 2007, p.3. (<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/? lng=en& id=53572>).

diplomatic relations with Taiwan in order to calm China since the US emphasized on the diplomatic relations with China by that time. Viewed realistically, the US-Taiwan security relationship has been very successful. The reason is that the US sets 'peaceful solution of Taiwan' very tactfully and diplomatically before China. China has been in a political trap like 'peaceful means or solution' about the Taiwan case since China has agreed in 1972 and 1979 communiqués with the US. So, against the will of Taiwan, China cannot force Taiwan to reunification. Despite the political pressure from China, the US Congressional support for Taiwan has still been very firm. The Congressional Taiwan Caucus has 149 members which is the second largest caucus in the House of Representatives.<sup>71</sup> In May 2011, Senate Taiwan Caucus sent a letter to President Obama urging the approval of modern weaponries including F-16c and D Fighters to Taiwan. "The letter was signed by a total of 45 senators."<sup>72</sup>

China's government views, any arms sales to Taiwan are nothing but interference in the internal affairs of China. China still believes:

With the return of Hong Kong in 1997 and of Macau in 1999, Chinese leaders see Taiwan as the last remaining obstacle to completion of the communist revolution and restoration of the Chinese nation after a century and a half of foreign intervention and civil strife.<sup>73</sup>

### **Conclusion**

It appears from the above study, that the US maintained security relationship with Taiwan through the Taiwan Relations Act and different treaties with China. And China continuously tried to oppose any security relationship between the US and Taiwan since China cannot cope with the US-Taiwan alliance in terms of military power. On the other hand, China cannot recognize the fact that Taiwan is a sovereign state which might fuel other parts like Tibet's independence in near future. That is why China diplomatically keeps pressure on the US against any arms sales to Taiwan.

The case of Taiwan cannot be solved militarily. This is a political problem either in China or between China and Taiwan. This may be between China and

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 1

<sup>72</sup> "Chinese Reactions to Taiwan Arms Sales", *US-Taiwan Business Council, Project 2049 Institute*, 2012 (March), p. 98, ([http://www.us-taiwan.org/reports/2012\\_chinese\\_reactions\\_to\\_taiwan\\_arms\\_sales.pdf](http://www.us-taiwan.org/reports/2012_chinese_reactions_to_taiwan_arms_sales.pdf))

<sup>73</sup> Frison, Douglas and Scobell, Andrew, "China's Military Threat to Taiwan In the Era of Hu Jintao", *Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College*, 2004, p. 3. (<http://people.duke.edu/~niou/teaching/FrisonScobell.pdf>).

Taiwan with the involvement of the US because Taiwan no longer believes in their Chinese identity; rather they believe that they are Taiwanese. Since the US earns a huge amount of money by selling conventional weapons to Taiwan, the US does not want to solve the Taiwan problem between China and Taiwan at all. The US simply wants to continue current status-quo in the Asia-Pacific region in order to curb China's emergence as a possible superpower in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As much as China grows economically and militarily, the US will cooperate more with one of her longest allies like Taiwan by providing conventional weapons which will serve the purposes of both the US and Taiwan as well. + realistically objective the US cannot retreat from Taiwan since many other allies rely on the US for security and other issues for a long time across the world. Any US withdrawal from Taiwan may influence other allies which may certainly bring huge diplomatic disaster for the US across the globe.

On the other hand, China will continuously keep pressure on the US to maintain 'one China policy' which the US committed in 1972 and onwards. Only for the Taiwan case, the two powers like the US and China may engage in any war as both powers have very devastating weapons like nuclear, chemical or biological bombs. That is why the peaceful solution of the Taiwan case is desirable to all. Interestingly, the current status quo is the possible best solution in the Taiwan Strait because this status quo keeps all the concerned countries far from war so far successfully.