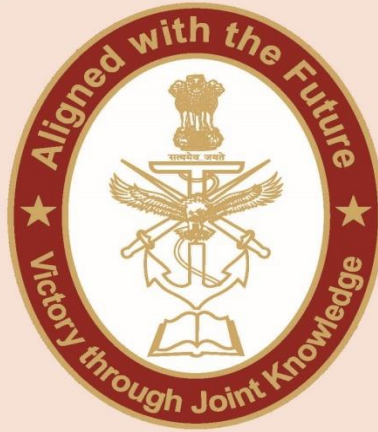


# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

**THE UKRAINE WAR AND TAIWAN CRISIS ARE MANIFESTATIONS OF A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER: INDIA MUST REMAIN NIMBLE**



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### PART II - TAIWAN CRISIS AND OPTIONS FOR INDIA

In Part I, we analysed the changing international Order, which is the cause of all the geo-political turbulence, of which the Ukraine war is a direct manifestation. A prognosis of the ongoing war was carried out along with its impact on China, and how India has navigated the choppy waters adroitly. **See link below to read Part I.** We move on and discuss the Taiwan crisis which too is a direct result of the changing global dynamics.

**Nancy Pelosi's visit: catalyst to the Taiwan Crisis.** US-China relations have been confrontational and frosty for a while, with USA the current supremo wanting to continue with its unipolar ways, and China showcasing an alternate ideology and autocratic governance style (gathering some follower nations along the way); a worthy challenger none-the-less, wanting its deserved place at the high table, and moving aggressively with the intent of dethroning the King. After lots of threats and drama and much against the wishes of the Chinese government, and even President Biden and his staff and Pentagon, Nancy Pelosi the speaker of the Senate and third senior most US Government official made a whirlwind trip to Taiwan lasting less than 24 hours (02–03 August 2022) as part of a four nations Asian tour. The trip was symbolic showing solidarity with Taiwan; technically it was not an official state visit, but the strategic

messaging and implications were huge. Both USA and China have resorted to brinkmanship, which could go horribly wrong. The crisis has not yet played out, with China conducting a tri-services, multi-domain live-fire exercise in the South China sea encircling Taiwan, with five missiles reported to have even landed in the EEZ of Japan. Moving aggressively and quickly Beijing also cancelled military calls between area commanders, defence meetings, and Chinese foreign minister twice stormed out of diplomatic gatherings attended by the US. China will no longer take part in talks on maritime safety, climate change and anti-drug efforts with USA. Personal sanctions against Pelosi and her family were also announced in response to what the Chinese Foreign Ministry called her “egregious provocations.”

China had ratcheted up potential confrontation weeks ago by declaring that the Taiwan Strait that separates the island from the mainland is not international waters. The US rejected this and responded by sending more vessels through it. USA obviously wanted to establish her dominance and showcase her power projection capabilities, especially when the world specially her allies began doubting US capabilities, intent and will, watching US internal dynamics and ‘America First’ policy, accompanied by withdrawing/cooling off from Afghanistan, Syria and Middle East. Taiwan under President Tsai Ing-wen has responded in a mature, measured manner, firm but without brinkmanship, and once Pelosi landed accorded her the decorum reserved for a significant strategic leader, and even honoured her with Taiwan’s highest civilian award ‘Order of the Propitious Clouds with Special Grand Cordon’. Concurrently and prudently, Taiwan has put itself on high alert, air raid shelters have been prepared and the government is increasing training for recruits serving their four months of required military service, considered inadequate along with annual two-week annual refresher courses for reservists.

### **Have both USA and China pre-planned exploitation of the Pelosi visit, or is it power rivalry playing out?**

**USA.** In its NSS and NDS (National Security and Defence Strategy) right from 2018 onwards, USA has named China as its peer competitor and adversary, while concurrently identifying Russia, Iran and North Korea who are likely to disturb and challenge the established Order. Relations with China went into a tail spin ever since COVID. Long-simmering disputes over China’s human rights record and trade policies boiled over under Donald Trump, who instigated a tariff war with China and blamed the country for the coronavirus pandemic. Things have not improved under President Biden. China’s support for Russia in its war on Ukraine has annoyed Washington, adding to strains over Beijing’s aggressive efforts to win influence in the Indo-Pacific, South-Pacific, Africa and other regions;

Chinese multi-domain espionage; and manoeuvres in the South China Sea; relentless crushing of dissent in Hong Kong and large-scale human rights violations perpetrated in Xinjiang. Geo-politically and ideologically, China's rise coupled with President Xi's ambitions; increasing aggressive hegemonic tendencies; ascendance in the comprehensive national power (CNP-especially military) and global status index; interventions reaching global proportions due increasing power projection capabilities; have unsettled USA which as already stated sees China as a direct competitor, who has the will, capacity and capability to upstage USA if not thwarted urgently. Hence, a combination of competition and confrontation for multi-domain (PDIME – political, diplomatic, Informational, military, economic) supremacy globally, is the root cause of global turbulence, especially in Asia which has been accepted as the pivotal continent for decades to come. While some nations mainly Asian (and within US too) have questioned the timing of Pelosi's visit being too close to the 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CCP being held in Nov 22, US compulsion was the repercussions on its international standing if had backed out. Moreover, Chinese belligerent hyper-reactions including demonstrating its hard-military power, has worked in US favour, by alienating many nations who preferred to stay non-aligned in the US-China confrontation, and consolidated held perceptions of US allies.

**China.** China too has exploited this opportunity diplomatically, politically and militarily. China's live fire exercise has showcased her ability to encircle and probably blockade the Taiwan Strait which has geo-strategic implications; it is one of the world's busiest trade routes after all. The proximity of the action to ports and shipping lanes has forced supply line delays, a small taste of the pain China could inflict on Taiwan and world markets. We all know that Taiwan is 'The leading producer' of advanced semiconductors critical to products from cars to advanced weaponry. Tri-services, multi-domain (land, air, sea, amphibious, space, info-sphere) live fire exercises provided rehearsal for the actual invasion whenever launched. Mobilising and deployment of forces from outside the theatre, providing integration and interoperability experience, testing modern and new weapon systems both kinetic and non-kinetic (like radars, communications, electronic warfare), a big confidence boost with internal signalling to satisfy Chinese nationalists, finetuning operational and logistic plans including amphibious operations which are extremely complicated, are some of the strategic payoffs which have accrued thanks to the Pelosi visit. Experts globally specially from the USA have commented very favourable on the professionalism on the conduct of operations. Strategically, USA has signalled her strong intent and support to Taiwan when called upon, and China too has signalled her firm resolve to go to any lengths to maintain her 'One China' identity, even if it means using force against a global coalition led by USA. Whether both will follow

through if and when war happens only time will tell. What has disturbed world leaders is that the probability of war has increased sharply after this visit, which could prove existential for the globe!

**Most Asian and Global South Countries find themselves between a 'rock and hard place' post Pelosi visit.** The unexpected escalation intenuous US-China relations has left many nations nonplussed, uncomfortable and caught between a 'rock and hard place'. Most nations except the traditional Western allies and Japan and Australia, do not wish to get caught up in this whirlpool (even South Korea has snubbed Pelosi by the President finding an excuse Not to meet her). Chinese over-heated reaction would have earned worldwide censure and condemnation, but nations are strangely quiet; probably many governments saw Pelosi's visit as crossing a red line causing unnecessary and unwarranted strife in the region; similar to NATO encouraging and indicating willingness for Ukraine to join NATO. Shahrman Lockman, a director at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Malaysia said "Most Southeast Asian countries will view the United States as having provoked China's entirely predictable overreaction.<sup>1</sup>" President Trump's aggressive stance against China has been continued by Biden (much to the dismay of the Chinese), who has sought to build a broad coalition in Asia to push back against Chinese overreach, in part by telling smaller economies they don't need to pick sides. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework which excluded China, unveiled by Biden during a visit to South Korea in May, was emblematic of the approach. Suddenly, Pelosi's visit has touched a red line, to take sides on the most obvious red flag/line of China; its 'One China policy', and most nations have blinked.

**Strategic Implications of Chinese Actions.** "China probably doesn't want to go to war to achieve its ends,". This below-threshold type of conflict, also called "grey-zone" warfare by security experts, is part of China's playbook with Taiwan and countries in the region with which it has territorial disputes. The world and particularly India are all too familiar with its 'salami slicing' operational tactics coupled with its 3Ws strategy (an official political and information pre-kinetic warfare strategy of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) employing media or public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare). A blockade or a quarantine are scenarios that US and her allies and Asian nations are not ready for, and would find it tricky to respond. Taking a leaf from the US book, China also has turned to forms of economic coercion such as import bans on countries who have disagreements with China, viz Australia, Canada and others. An immediate casualty of the Pelosi visit were Chinese imports of Taiwanese citrus and other agricultural products<sup>2</sup>.

**The Chinese have been anticipating a global blowback against her ever since COVID**, aggravated by the support to Russia for the Ukraine war. China has unveiled earlier this year a new strategic framework, called the “Global Security Initiative (GSI)”<sup>3</sup>, which consolidates several strands of Beijing’s evolving conceptualisation of the global order. President Xi seeks to seize the narrative on global security away from the US and its allies in Europe and the Indo-Pacific, and discourage countries from joining ‘The Western Group’. He is showcasing an alternative international order centred around China: a force of stability and predictability in the face of an increasingly volatile and unpredictable USA, an innovator and leader in twenty-first-century global governance. This narrative is finding takers from nations frustrated by the current US led Order, as also so-called illiberal regimes ruled by dictators or autocrats (Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, North Korea, Venezuela and Global South). Cemented on the China-Russia strategic partnership, China seeks to enlarge her favourable organisations like BRICS (Argentina, Iran officially applied, and Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey indicating interest) and SCO. Then there is this geo-politically vital issue of ‘currency change’ from the dollar, which has got a resurgence from allies and adversaries alike. Most geo-political observers are in consonance, that China will grow even more aggressive after the Chinese Congress, once President Xi consolidates his power. Finally, to back everything up, is China’s blitzkrieg in diplomacy, and economic ramp up, and vitally -military capability and capacity development specially in hi-tech and niche arenas, in consonance with its superpower ‘China Dream’ ambitions.

### **Indian Options to Navigate the Taiwan Crisis within constraints of current turbulence in Global Order**

India must be credited with navigating the choppy geo-political waters adroitly with its cornerstone policy of ‘strategic autonomy. In a way, the Ukraine war and Taiwan crisis has got coupled geo-politically and diplomatically. The central actors are the same, mainly USA and China, and India does not wish to get involved in the emerging highly probable ‘cold war’ situation between USA and China. She seeks to avoid unnecessary confrontation with China at a sensitive time along the LAC, but doesn’t wish to claim allegiance to the “One China policy” either. Interestingly, India has not referred to the “One China” policy since at least 2010. Amid growing number of international reactions adversarial to India’s stance, New Delhi has chosen to maintain a “studied silence” on the unfolding situation, omitting any mention of it in diplomatic dialogues, including the latest talks held by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on the side-lines of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Phnom Penh. The decision to avoid discussion is obviously deliberate and

a 'diligently analysed one'. However, India can indeed derive lessons from the way Taiwan has reacted to the crisis.

India has finally and unequivocally accepted that China only understands the language of strength and intent, coupled with pro-active actions on ground; which has been amply demonstrated in Doklam in 2019 and East Ladakh since 2020. Learning from the Taiwan Crisis and in consonance with shifting geo-political order, India needs to take more assured and confident steps. Firstly, we must specifically lay down red lines and our national position, specially regards our sovereignty and territorial integrity; failing which 'salami slicing' will continue and in fact increase. Secondly, it is time the Government sets out the actual ground situation along the LAC without ambiguity. Failure to do so, will actually embolden China as neither the Nation nor the World would know of Chinese perfidious actions. Thirdly, India needs to further consolidate, get more involved and strengthen alliances like QUAD, BRICS as a counter measure to China's rising power and hegemonic tendencies. Fourthly, India must not feel compelled to appease China or be overcautious; after all China has grabbed our lands and doing every hostile action possible in all domains both kinetic and non-kinetic. A very important lesson related to the economic and trade domain; China has as much to lose if not more. The interdependency of China and Taiwan is far more; however, it did not deter either China or Taiwan to act on their national strategic interests.

## **Conclusion**

The two-part article highlighted the changing global order, with USA and China vying for primacy and with neither willing to give a quarter. The competition and confrontation have become multi-domain be it political, economic, military, diplomatic or informational. The danger due to brinkmanship on both sides is the increasing probability of conflict in any part of the globe. The manifestation of this changing Order is clearly evident in the ongoing Ukraine war and Taiwan crisis. India with its own vulnerabilities and challenges, but with growing confidence and CNP, needs to look after its national interests and sovereignty by anticipating events and being nimble, which she has done admirably so far.

### **Link to read Part I**

<https://cenjows.in/pdf-view/?url=2022/08/The-Ukraine-War-and-Taiwan-Crises-by-Lt-Gen-PR-Kumar-Retd-on-10-Aug-2022.pdf&pID=17430>.

## **CERTIFICATE**

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<sup>1</sup>**Pelosi Trip Sets Back Biden's Effort to Woo Asia Against China**, by Sarah Zheng and Philip Heijmans, 09 Aug 22, Bloomberg Asia Edition, available at <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-09/pelosi-trip-hinders-biden-effort-to-galvanize-asia-against-china>. Accessed on 10 Aug 22

<sup>2</sup>The New York Times, Opinion Today, 09 Aug 22, Yara Bayoumi, available at <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/#inbox/WhctKKXgjGxmGLtwJVHhNPIdHMjKvLGQHhfzvtgHzvDxGthWHvIMiKLWkJfhwRxgtKbQvv>. Accessed on 10 Aug 22

<sup>3</sup>**China on the Offensive: How the Ukraine War Has Changed Beijing's Strategy**, by Bonny Lin and Jude Blanchette, August 01, 2022, Foreign Affairs, available at [https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-offensive?utm\\_medium=newsletters&utm\\_source=twofa&utm\\_campaign=China%20on%20the%20Offensive&utm\\_content=20220805&utm\\_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017](https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/china-offensive?utm_medium=newsletters&utm_source=twofa&utm_campaign=China%20on%20the%20Offensive&utm_content=20220805&utm_term=FA%20This%20Week%20-%20112017). Accessed on 08 Aug 2022