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**HOW WOULD PEACEFUL RISE OF CHINA TRANSLATE  
INTO MAINLAND-TAIWAN RELATIONS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research is to observe the delicate nature of Mainland-Taiwanese relations through the prism of peaceful rise of China. The claim has the following two sides. Firstly, China, as growing power, is able to rise peacefully without entering a great power conflict with the United States, unlike many contemporary researchers and theorists argue. Secondly, the rise of China inevitably creates more dynamic and closer economic and political ties between Mainland and Taiwan.

Critical analysis is being used to challenge the core assumptions of neorealists as well as the English school approach alongside with theory of peaceful rise of China is applied to reach the conclusions of this research. In accordance with discourse analysis this research arrives to the last conclusion which states that China is in fact rising peacefully and it thus creates more dynamic cross-strait relations.

**Keywords:** The People's Republic of China, the USA, peaceful rise of China, Mainland-Taiwanese relations, neorealism, the English school.

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of China has been a hot topic for years now – and for a good reason, China is the second largest economy in the world right after the United States of America (USA). It has also been often debated whether the rise of China is peaceful as scholars such as Barry Buzan, for example, argue, or is it inevitably leading to a conflict with the USA, as scholars such as John Mearsheimer (2001) and Charles Glaser (2015) claims. Overall, the realist school of thought tends to treat the rise of China in a more pessimistic light staying true to the realist logic. The English school-linked theorists, on the other hand, addresses the rise of China as a more nuanced phenomenon. The English school goes deeper than just politics and economics and consider values as a part of being included in an international society. On the Chinese case, Buzan (2010) argues that East Asia shares stronger view on sovereignty and non-intervention than the global level but also Confucian culture and are more inclined towards hierarchy and bandwagoning than the West; in a significant addition, he notes that East Asian international society is already partially in existence.

Another critical issue in the politics of South-East Asia is the issue of the status of Taiwan. As one of the last ‘relics’ of the Cold War and the XX century, it remains until this date one of the unsolved problems in the region. Many of the researchers in the field and academia, in general, remain unanimous that Taiwan is an issue in which the US and China could escalate a conflict (Sutter 2013, Kastrati 2015, Buzan 2010). Therefore, it is crucial as well as intriguing to study the delicate dynamics of the Mainland-Taiwanese relations and, more precisely, how the peaceful rise of China would translate into the relations between the two. China especially has been assertive when it comes to Taiwan and treats the issue as having a domestic nature and does not approve of foreign intervention regarding the island nation (Qiamo 1996). Also, the US role in the conflict between China and Taiwan has been substantial from the beginning. Though the US official stance is *strategic ambiguity* in which the US supports a peaceful settlement between the two, and it does not wish to act as a mediator (ibid.). Chen Qiamo also points out that despite the official US stance, there are still influential groups and entities that advocate Taiwan being democratised and industrialised nation and claim the current framework being outdated (ibid.). Thus, ultimately

being the reason why the scholars such as Sutter, Buzan and Kastrati claim that Taiwan is the issue that could drift the two powers into a conflict against one and other.

Considering the above, this paper offers a hypothesis that the factor of peaceful rise of China seems more likely than the neorealist scenario of an inevitable escalation between the two great powers, the US and China. The second side of the same claim is that the peaceful rise of China will tie China and Taiwan closer together both economically and politically. The purpose of this paper is not to get into a debate on the Taiwanese status but merely to observe the development of the Mainland-Taiwanese relations through the prism of the peaceful rise of China. To reach this paper's goal, two research questions emerged as the essential ones: (1) what is meant by the peaceful rise of China? And is it likely or not; (2) how the concept of peaceful rise of China would translate into Mainland-Taiwanese relations?

To analyse the first research question, the method of critical analysis will be conducted. I will analyse peer-reviewed articles and other related literature to shed light on the matter of the peaceful rise of China. Comparisons and critical analysis between the different authors will be conducted to gain an understanding of the research question. Critical analysis is best-suited method for the first question because the rise of China is widely debated phenomenon among theorists from different schools of thought. Critical analysis will be used to challenge the core assumptions of neorealism, especially the idea presented by several authors that China and the US will clash a conflict due to the nature of international system. Second assumption that is challenged by said method is idea of territorial accommodation presented by Glaser (2015). To finalise the argument and to analyse the second research question the paper will provide for summing up the theories on the peaceful rise of China and apply them to the Mainland-Taiwanese case study using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a well-suited method in analysing both Chinese and Taiwanese views through the prism of the peaceful rise of China presented in the previous part. Structure-wise, this paper is divided into three sections. In the first part, this paper provides a background analysis on the Mainland-Taiwanese relations. The second part includes the theoretical debate between the structural realist argument on the rise of China and English schools and more precisely Buzan's (2010) approach to the rise of China. The third part is discussion, and it is where the aforementioned theoretical framework will be applied onto the Mainland-Taiwanese relations.

# **1. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO MAINLAND-TAIWANESE RELATIONS**

As stated in the introduction, the current state of Mainland-Taiwanese relations is one of the last ‘relics’ of the XX century and the Cold War. The relations between the two have for long been difficult. The defeat of the Japanese in the Second World War resulted in the secession of Taiwan back to China according to the 1943 Cairo Declaration. The fact that China had to go through the horrors of civil war did not make the situation any easier in fact, it is one of the key reasons on why the two countries separated in the first place. The dispute often comes down to the interpretation of the Cairo declaration where Taiwan is stated to be ceded back to China. The Republic of China (ROC) that had fled to Taiwan made claims that as a *de facto* representative during the time of the making of the declaration would thus make the ROC the rightful representation of China. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) on the other hand, claimed that as a victor of the civil war and as a *de facto* ruler of the Mainland China, the PRC was the rightful representor of China, therefore claiming Taiwan being rightfully theirs (Kastrati 2015).

The structure of this part will be separated into three parts. First, this research will cover the issues of the Taiwan Strait crises taking place in 1954-55, 1958 and 1995-96. Explaining these crises hold significant relevance, because of how they shaped to Mainland-Taiwanese relations long into the modern day. Second, this research will provide the Chinese perspective in the relations with Taiwan to illustrate what are the Chinese concerns and position. Lastly, this paper will outline the Taiwanese perspective and their interests and situation.

## **1.1. The Taiwan Strait crises**

As a result of the Chinese civil war, the losing side Kuomintang (KMT) forces retreated to the island of Taiwan and took it under their control. Initially after the civil war, Chinese communists were not ready to act against the island. The change to that came about as a result of the Korean War in which the US with the UN mandate and allies worked against the deteriorated situation in

the Korean peninsula. The Chinese came to aid the North Koreans as they (PRC) did not want to see US troops in its borders. For the US on the other hand, the Chinese Civil War did not play a significant role before the Korean War.

On the contrary, the Truman administration made statements that the US would not intervene in defence of Taiwan and excluded Taiwan from the US defence strategy in the West-Pacific (Matsumoto 2012). The US saw the threat of communism emerging in Asia due to Soviet influence and the Korean War. Therefore it took a stance that spread of communism in the region will be stopped. Matsumoto (2012) argues that it was precisely the Korean War that saved the ROC from the worsened situation with the PRC. The ROC became major part for US anti-communist bloc and became a key supporter and security provider for the ROC (Kastrati 2015). Additionally, looking at cross-strait relations in modern perspective and the US involvement, according to Qiamo the problem is not about whether the US is involved in the issue or not but as they have been involved in the region since the Korean War, it is about how the US plays its role (1996).

The First Taiwan Strait crisis began in September 1954 when the PRC forces started to bombard the nearby islands under ROC control. Bombardment caused casualties killing US military advisors in the island and forcing rest to evacuate. The PRC's goals in initiating the bombardment were to liberate Taiwan but also to intervene in a possible military alliance between the US and the ROC (Matsumoto 2012). Additionally, the PRC worried that the ROC would join any regional security framework that would be a threat to the PRC's sovereignty (ibid.). For the US, the dilemma was whether to defend the offshore islands under the PRC's radar or not. Due to inevitable evacuation from the islands to Taiwan, the US started to seek ways to pursue peace in the region. The US initiatives in the UN made the ROC anxious that recognition of the crisis in the international arena would create a concept of 'two Chinas' thus recognising the existence of the PRC (ibid.). For the PRC on the other hand, any formal recognition of the existence of the ROC in international arenas would go against their initial strategy of liberating Taiwan, which they saw as a domestic matter. The crisis began to de-escalate on the PRC's initiative, where the PRC was seeking a ceasefire. Discussions were held with the US where the PRC repeated their stance that Taiwan is an internal matter not to be negotiated with external powers. However, the PRC gained legitimacy internationally by having talks and discussions on ending the crisis with the US.

The second Taiwan Strait crisis, which is often also referred to as the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis, was similar to the first one. The PRC bombarded the same offshore islands that it had been a few years earlier. The US, following its defensive commitments, supplied Taiwan with arms and military material while continued PRC bombardment took place. The PRC had not given up its goals on leaving Taiwan alone but used the bombardment as a reminder to the Taiwanese. The situation remained unstable until the US and the PRC established diplomatic relations in 1979. Many of the factors stayed same; the Chinese objective was to undermine the US commitment to defending Taiwan, and also a reaction to the downgrading of the USA-PRC talks that had begun after the First Taiwan Strait crisis (Kissinger 2012, 172). Another reason for the re-escalation of the crisis can be seen being with Chinese relations towards the USSR. According to Henry Kissinger, Mao saw the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence problematic, making the USSR weak ally and even as a potential adversary (2012, 173). Mao cleverly used Taiwan to make the USSR and the US against each other over a territory that holds insignificant geopolitical value (Kissinger 2012, 178). By making the USSR and the US threaten each other with nuclear weapons, Mao managed not only to test his alliance with the USSR and also to pressure the US. After the second crisis, the status quo between the Taiwan Strait stabilised until the mid-1990s.

The Third Taiwan Strait crisis took place in 1995-1996. Although the years precluding the crisis between the two were relatively peaceful, the change came about after economic development and democratisation of Taiwan. Even though both maintained seemingly peaceful relations, there were underlying tensions that had remained the same since the 1950s. The US under the President Clinton's approval of Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui visa to visit his *Alma mater* Cornell University infuriated PRC leadership which they ultimately saw as Americans giving a platform for a man who Beijing unanimously saw as the main impediment in unifying China (Cohen 2010, 255). The visit acted as a catalyst for the crisis but was not the actual cause (Thies, Bratton 2004). The PRC had in many occasions highlighted that the Taiwan status is a matter of internal nature not to be negotiated with external powers, namely the US. The fact that the US approved a visa for President Lee was seen by Beijing as Taiwan's effort to break out of the 'one China' policy. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted missile tests and increased activities on the PRC side of the strait. The tests were designed to send a message to the Taiwanese to show what the PRC thinks about such efforts at trying to appear sovereign in the international arenas.

The PRC treated the issue being related to Sino-US relations after all, it was the US that approved Lee's visa. Therefore, the PRC urged the US to act unless they did not want to damage Sino-

American relations. The situation was challenging for the US as they could not merely treat high ranking Taiwanese officials as a representor for the sovereign state without breaking commitment that every US administration since Nixon had made to the principle of 'one China' (Cohen 2010, 255). To ease the conflict and tensions between the PRC and Taiwan, President Clinton reaffirmed the US commitment to the 'one China' policy and reiterated that 'America's one China' policy is beneficial for the US, the PRC and Taiwan as it promotes peaceful resolution (Qiamo 1996).

## **1.2. The Chinese perspective**

Chinese became more active in the region due to the communist victory in the late 1940s, and the threat of having US troops in the Korean border made the PRC assist the North-Koreans in the Korean War creating communist ally buffer-zone in between capitalist South-Korea and the PRC. The Taiwan Strait crises in the 1950s showed that the Chinese were assertive in fulfilling their interest in the region. To meet their goals, Mao used the hostility between the US and the USSR (Kissinger p.148 2012) cleverly. Mao set his sights towards Taiwan soon after the situation in Korean peninsula stabilised. The ROC as a nationalist government in exile was a clear threat to the PRC's ambitions as the ROC occupied the position as formal representor of China (ibid.). The PRC declared their rule over all of China, including Taiwan, which under the Cairo declaration were to be ceded back to China (Kastrati 2015). In PRC's view, Taiwan as a renegade province has allied with foreign powers that contribute into Chinese sentiment of 'century of humiliation' (Kissinger 2012, 151). This notion has transferred into today's cross-strait relations as last 'relics' of the Cold war. Kissinger continues that there is only one China, but ultimately the conflict is about which government, Beijing or Taipei is the rightful one (2012, 152). Taiwan as it is considered as an internal matter by Beijing, is also a matter of national dignity and national survival (Kastrati 2015). The PRC leadership appeal to the so-called '1992 Consensus' in which it is in the simplest terms formulated that there is only one China. Beijing has adopted this bi-lateral consensus as for their main policy line in Deng Xiaoping's Taiwan policy 'one country, two systems' in which Taiwan is made a special administrative region that may keep its system, but only Beijing is the representor of China in the international affairs. In Deng's view, socialism in the mainland could coexist without the other swallowing the other, Taiwan could keep its independent character (Qiamo 1996).

From the beginning, the PRC's primary objective has been isolating Taiwan from international arenas by qualifying Taiwan question as internal matter (Kastrati 2015). By stripping Taipei down from any foreign influence, they may have, Beijing is aiming to pressure Taiwan under the 'one country, two systems' formula. The first success in doing so was a significant one in 1971 when Taiwan lost its seat in the UN to Beijing, and Taipei lost the bulk of its diplomatic influence in international relations (Zhao quoted in Kastrati 2015). Later in the same decade, the PRC scored another breakthrough when the US switched its official recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979 Joint Communique. Though, this can be seen as US concessions towards Chinese claims of 'one China' it is in the US interest to keep Taiwan strait as stable as possible after two major crises between the PRC and the ROC. This major shift in the US foreign policy came about after Sino-Soviet split after which the US tried to isolate the PRC from the USSR by making diplomatic concessions such as the Joint Communique (Kastrati 2015). Although it may seem that Sino-US relations were developing to the positive, there were still underlying issues straining the relationship. The US did make concessions to Beijing by shifting the official recognition from Taipei to Beijing, but it never renounced its commitment to the island government, which remains to be a key difference which is fundamentally important for the PRC (Sutter 2013, 184). Example of this is the display of the US strength during the 1995-96 crisis, in which President Clinton sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to face of the Chinese forces, which led to lessons learned for the Chinese national security planners (Sutter 2013, 187). Sutter continues that since the incident, the PRC's Taiwan strategy must involve military force that could impede or deter the use of US forces in case of Taiwanese independence (ibid.).

The PRC started to be better integrated into international society after its diplomatic breakthroughs in the 1970s. Controlling the Chinese seat in the UN arguably has had an effect in doing so but also improved diplomatic relations with the US has contributed to this integration. Buzan argues that since 1970, China took more state-based discourse of international society instead of class-based one (2010). He adds that additionally with 'four modernisations' policy enabled PRC to abandon economic self-reliance (ibid.). Development was made possible after the death of Mao and ascendance of Deng Xiaoping to the head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Deng was serious in his attempts to evolve and modernise China. In a speech he gave in May 1977, he stated that "China must do better than Meiji restoration in Japan" (quoted in Kissinger 2012, 322). These changes in domestic policies had caused the remarkable economic growth in China that has left the rest of the world speechless.

### 1.3. The Taiwanese perspective

When it comes to the Taiwanese perspective, the question of the Taiwan status often comes down to the Cairo declaration of 1943. Initially, the ROC claimed that they are the rightful representative of China, because Chiang-Kai-Shek was the negotiator in Cairo in 1943. The basis for the ROC argument is therefore that as the KMT rule was the *de facto* and *de jure* leadership in China at the time of Japanese defeat, they are the rightful leaders of Taiwan and all of China. Despite the loss in the Chinese Civil War, the KMT government in exile still made statements and claims backed by the US that the ROC is the only representation of China in international relations. These claims and statements have since then deteriorated and became more about the Taiwanese future as an independent nation. This notion is due to official recognition of the PRC government in the UN and official US recognition of Beijing instead of Taipei. Although the Taiwanese status in IR has significantly decreased since its hay-day, it still has spent decades as separated from the mainland as a self-governing region backed by strong ally thus creating a significant argument in favour for Taiwanese independence.

Taiwan experienced economic growth accompanied by democratisation in the post-Cold War era. The vast paradigm shift in the world politics caused by the Soviet collapse and the end of Cold War, Taiwan with economic success, made many namely President Lee aspire independent island nation with its representation in international arenas. In Lee's view, Taiwan had grown up from a five-year-old kid to adolescent who was ready to take responsibility and control over his own life by himself (Qiamo 1996). Additionally, he stated his view that cross-strait relations are a relationship between two independent countries (Sutter 2013, 233). These kinds of statements naturally ended up fuelling the conflict between the PRC and Taiwan. Lee's statements were against everything that the PRC stood for in cross-strait relations, so it is easy to see why Beijing did not take such comments lightly but more of as an insult. Taiwan as a former colony has experienced outside iron hand rule from the part of Japanese but also KMT when they initially set up the government there. Therefore, it is surprising to see that the Taiwanese desires for independence are not stronger than they currently are.

On a more practical note, Taiwan began to practice what Qiamo calls a 'pragmatic diplomacy' (1996). Its goal was to achieve a parallel representation model similar to that of pre-1989 Germany and Korea (ibid.). Taiwan would send diplomats to countries maintaining diplomatic relations with

the PRC and use economic incentives to be used in the campaign to re-enter the UN. One highlight of Lee's policy was the visit to the US that ultimately was the *casus belli* for the crisis of 1995-96. Despite Washington describing the visit merely as private, it was Lee who declared in Taiwanese media that his visit was a diplomatic breakthrough (Qiamo 1996). As stated earlier in this part, the PRC saw Lee's visit as a US effort to undermine PRC's claims over the island, which led to President Clinton reaffirming Beijing that the US is committed to 'one China' policy. President Lee took a different approach at home claiming in 1994 that 'one China' is American policy (Qiamo 1996), referring to Joint Communiqué of 1979. Taiwan's objective for the cross-strait policy was 'phased two Chinas' where there are two separate independent states; the PRC over at the mainland and the ROC in Taiwan (ibid.). Taipei rejects Beijing's 'one China' policy on the basis that it would subordinate Taiwanese government merely to a status of local government and the policy being only an excuse to eventual annexation of Taiwan.

For the Taiwanese, the leverage comes in the form of the US support and more specifically the Taiwan relations act of 1979. This act means that the US is committed to defending Taiwan in case of forceful invasion by the mainland. Additionally, under this act Washington allows arms trade to Taiwan to match the PLA's capabilities over the other side. Therefore, the threshold for the PRC aggression against Taiwan has certainly gotten higher, but this does not nonetheless exclude any possibility of future crisis. The PRC has not shied down from using assertive force in the region in a situation that is threatening the PRC's national interests, which can be seen when inspecting the three strait crises between the two. Taiwan should also recognise its part in the crises. The PRC has well-established in multiple occasions that it does not look kindly towards any Taiwanese attempts to break-out the 'one China' policy and Deng's formula. Because the PRC treats Taiwan issue as a matter of national security and therefore as a matter of national survival and legitimacy, it cannot hold back in a situation in which Taiwan declares independence. Hence, as Qiamo puts it, "since the question of 'one China' cannot be evaded, the two sides should reach consensus on that principle." (1996). For Taipei, it means that any effort to further create 'phased two Chinas' is going to be met with increased Chinese aggression that could ultimately end up in a great tragedy for the island nation. Therefore, it is imperative for the Taiwanese to continue on the path of cooperation and peaceful development because their actions can be just as responsible for the new crisis as the PRC's.

The three strait crises have had a fundamental effect on the Mainland-Taiwanese relations. Ultimately, the question can be traced back to the Cairo declaration which both parties interpret

differently. While both sides have legitimate claim for their case, both should recognise their responsibilities for the crisis. For the PRC, any aggressive measure will lead to further deepening of Taiwan-US relations. Taiwan on the other hand, should recognise the situation and avoid provoking the PRC with unrealistic claims over sovereignty and independence.

## **2. THE RISE OF CHINA AND CONTEMPORARY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The question of the China's rise has been a hot topic in the recent years among scholars not least because of their incredible rise but also because of the weakening of the US in the result of the 2008 financial crisis and also because of American economic stagnation and political divisions. With the Chinese rise, the question that is often asked is; Will China adopt Western values of democracy and human rights or whether they continue to develop their alternative? Some Westerners could interpret China's peaceful rise being process in which China adapts and accepts the Western values of democracy and human rights but based on research conducted here, that seems highly unlikely. While recent years under Xi Jinping has shown that China has become more assertive in South-East Asia, this paper finds the peaceful rise of China possible and likely despite Xi's leadership and aspirations. This research relies on Jian Zhang and Buzan among others' findings and core assumptions on the peaceful rise of China to illustrate that China is rising peacefully. In this part, I present key opposition and theorists that argue that Sino-American conflict is the inevitable and peaceful rise of China is not possible and apply critical analysis to the theoretical framework. Offensive realism treats this issue very differently from that of defensive realism. Therefore, I start analysing offensive realism first, then moving on to the defensive realism which is especially relevant to issue of Mainland-Taiwanese relations due to theory of 'grand bargain' by Glaser (2015) and lastly why China is, in fact rising peacefully using theories by Buzan (2010) and Zhang (2015).

### **2.1. Offensive neorealism and China's rise**

The offensive realists namely J. Mearsheimer argues that in case of China continuing to rise in the way it has been for the past 30-or-so years, it is likely to seek hegemony in Asia (Mearsheimer, Walt 2016). The main reason why the rise of China is essential for the realists is the fact that the status quo great powers, such as the US, fear prominent states seeking great power status with a growing economy and large population (Mearsheimer 2001). The traditional neorealist assumptions of the anarchic international system, security dilemma and offensive capabilities hold essential roles in the rise of China. The neorealist focus in Asia is that how would China's rise

affect the power balance currently in place in the region. Another assumption that Mearsheimer makes is that state survival is the primary goal for great powers (2001). This notion is agreeable in many ways; the main Chinese objective for example in Taiwan policy (among others) is ultimately regime's legitimacy and state survival. Western values are ultimately seen by the PRC as a threat to state survival and the regime's legitimacy. Therefore, it would be beneficial for China to challenge the US hegemony to prevent their influence gaining any foothold in the PRC's areas of interest. Buzan points out that the PRC adheres to the Westphalian values of state sovereignty and the principle of non-intervention (2010). Despite this, the PRC does not hold every Western institution in the same value. For example, the PRC has been sceptical towards any institution that promotes human rights, democracy and environmentalism (Buzan 2010). Such statements would imply a stronger influence of the realist logic that anarchic system is unavoidable and that any cooperation is merely to achieve national interests. China's adherence to Westphalian values can be interpreted to reflect Mearsheimer's thoughts that weaker powers avoid conflicts with much stronger powers (2001). Indicated on Sutter (2013 p.191) China conducted careful and thorough planning to recognise the US power and influence in the late 1990s, ultimately, being the result of Chinese weakness compared to the US at the time. Therefore, one could arrive at a conclusion using neorealist logic that the peaceful rise of China could be explained by the sheer nature of great power conditions in the wake of the new millennium.

Currently, the US policy of 'offshore balancing' is keen to maintain the power balance in both oceanic flanks of the US, in Europe and Asia (Ross 2013). Before American ascendance to the status quo power, it had to involve itself in brutal conflicts in the process of power balance. Hence, being the most prominent offensive realist argument regarding China – it was the Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan that challenged the power balance both in Europe and Asia, which dragged the US into the conflict. The offshore balancing reflects Ross' theory in which he reiterated the same notion, but he adds that the balance of power politics in the oceanic flanks is to prevent either European or Asian powers from considering expansion of their influence over to the Western hemisphere (Ross 2013). The worries attached to the rise of China are not only reflected on the PRC's strength compared to the US but compared to the PRC's neighbours as well. Ross argues that the pivot towards East-Asia taken by Obama administration reflects the worries presented by Mearsheimer and Walt that Chinese neighbours and the US allies are located geographically in challenging way, which makes power balancing difficult (2013, 2016). Such a situation led the Obama administration to launch initiatives in efforts at improving relations with countries in the immediate neighbourhood and periphery of China (2013). There are two main results with such

policies; (1) the US isolates China and its growth keeping the US influence in the area in a status quo situation and (2) stabilises East-Asian flank ultimately leading to the US status quo power in the international system. Although, such policies and strategy might lead to a more stable system for the time being, it could also bolster anti-American sentiments in the PRC political elite ultimately making China less dependent on the US-led world order, generate more opposition towards the US leadership in the PRC and making the US feel more threatened of Chinese revisionism and growing power and influence (Buzan 2010). In short, ‘offshore balancing’ as realist policy guideline could end up being an extremely short-sighted self-fulfilling prophecy, if not done correctly.

Realist rebuttal to this would be that the Chinese contestation towards the balance of power would come naturally despite their intentions because of the way the international structure is being set up (Ross 2013). Ross adds that once the Chinese are in control of the required capabilities, it will “presumably seek a dominant strategic position in East-Asia. This has been the European experience in the past 500 years.” (ibid.). While it is accurate that the PRC is likely to seek a more affordable position in the East-Asia, it does not have to lead to conflict necessarily. Europe, for instance, has seen a period of never seen peace and prosperity in the form of the EU. Realists have experienced difficulties in explaining European cooperation. Granted, NATO as a bandwagoning community is following realist logic, but the EU as a value-based community is something the realists do not have an answer at all. This point matters, because when we examine Asia through the prism of European cooperation, a similar process can be seen taking place in the form of ASEAN. Buzan points out (see introduction) that East Asia takes a strong view to values such as sovereignty and principle of non-intervention compared to global level, but also share the Confucian tradition with tendencies of bandwagoning and hierarchy instead of power balancing (ibid.). Ultimately, realists ignore incentives to cooperation that are not security-based.

Despite the grievances of the offensive realists in the question of whether China is rising peacefully or not, the reality might not seem as grim as one would expect. While China’s rise is often compared to that of the Nazi-Germany and Imperial Japan, the truth is that China has been rising peacefully for the last 30-or-so years, making aggressive military based regional hegemony seem odd. Not only that but also much like Buzan (2010) argued earlier that China had adopted fundamental Westphalian values such as sovereignty and principle of non-intervention, it would significantly contradict any notion of aggressive Chinese rise. Compared to rises of Germany and Japan in the first half of the XX century, such values would sound alien in contrast to their

emergence. While many realists continue to compare China's rise to Germany and Japan, it has never given any significant priority to its military power and controlling its hegemony by military force and occupation (Buzan 2010). China has benefitted from the US hegemony in the same way that the US benefitted from British hegemony during the US rise to great power. In a similar vein, China's rise is based on above all else in economic terms. Both, the PRC and the US have maintained military restraint and favoured economic development in pursuit of great power status (ibid.). As argued earlier in this part, the PRC maintains the tradition of Confucian values with its neighbours (ibid.) much in a similar manner that the US held liberal democratic values after its ascendance to the power status. While there indeed is a high level of competition and security-related concerns among the PRC and the US, the inevitability of a great power conflict is unlikely based on this research. It can be suggested, that the fact that China's rise has been peaceful for years now indicate that their path is more in line with the rise of the US during early XX century to which I shall come back later.

## **2.2. Defensive neorealism and the rise of China**

The defensive neorealism and more specifically Charles L. Glaser's theory have a very different approach to the rise of China compared to the offensive counterpart. Glaser's (2015) theory is especially relevant in analysing Taiwan question as it attempts to not only accommodate the rise of China but also solve the Taiwan issue. The question his theory asks is whether the US should pursue a strategy of limited geopolitical accommodation to avoid conflict (2015). Conversely, he argues that the US policy scope is entirely focused on preserving the current geopolitical status quo in East Asia. The purpose of the so-called 'grand bargain' would in Glaser's words be to negotiate "a grand bargain that ends the US commitment to defend Taiwan against Chinese aggression" (ibid). In return, he argues that the PRC would settle its territorial disputes in South-China sea and East-China seas peacefully and additionally accepts the US presence in the region (ibid.). The basis for this accommodation is similar to the offensive realism as he argues that continued Chinese rise in the area primarily as China is a growing power with growing economy and influence, would eventually lead into a clash with the US (ibid.). This theory also rests on two core assumptions; (1) the US seeks to maintain a grand strategy which requires the US presence in the region and (2) that China continues to rise and gain prestige in the region (ibid.). The difference to the offensive variant is that Glaser's theory considers the peaceful rise of China

possible if their rise is managed. Therefore, arriving at another fundamental realist assumption that for status quo powers, the management of the system is beneficial.

The situation and the focus of the theory are given to the case in Taiwan. As reflected earlier in this paper, Taiwan is one of the core interests of the PRC, based on the fact that the PRC treats the Taiwan issue as a domestic matter. The sheer assertiveness from the Chinese side to any action by Taipei which they consider an act towards independence has been met with aggressive tones from Beijing. Additionally, the Taiwan Relations Act from 1979 binds the US to the crisis in a way that has proved to be an awkward position for Washington. By the Act, the US will defend Taiwan in the case of unprovoked attack but also will not come to the Taipei's aid in case they act provocatively. Such an act of provocation includes unilateral acts towards the island's independence. According to the Act, Washington reserves rights to sell Taiwan American weaponry, which additionally is a problem for the PRC.

Glaser argues, that his theory would significantly reduce the risk of great power conflict over Taiwan (2015). Indeed, as many scholars have for years argued is that Taiwan is one of the regions in which threat of great power conflict is present. Though the US maintains certain security guarantees towards Taiwan, the US has no control or influence towards Taipei's policies. This idea is also in line with Glaser's thoughts that "the US maintain limited control over Taiwan's policy which puts it in the unfortunate position of being hostage to decisions made in Taipei." (2015). Furthermore, the risk of confrontation is multiplied by the PLA's strong presence on the other side of the strait, units that have been modernised over the years as seen during the 1995-96 crisis. It was a demonstration of the Chinese force to show the Taiwanese that it was capable of wreaking havoc without full-scale invasion (Cohen 2010, 256). The build-up of the Chinese military in the region is not necessarily to challenge the US as Mearsheimer would argue, but rather to deter the US from fulfilling its security guarantees over Taiwan, which again would make accommodation such as 'the grand bargain' beneficial.

However, Glaser's theory does not come without flaws. Firstly, the most obvious and consequently the most common critique is that his theory treats Taiwan as a bargaining chip that could be passed around and traded over concessions in another issue using issue linkage. Additionally, as even he states in his theory, the grand bargain would put the US commitments in the region under dubious light. Especially the US allies such as Japan and South-Korea would question the reliability of the US security guarantees and therefore, jeopardise vital US security interests in East Asia. Secondly,

it makes the bold assumption that such negotiations for a grand bargain is in Chinese interests. Mentioned already on many occasions, the PRC treats Taiwan as a matter of domestic nature so why would the PRC negotiate over something they currently see owning?

Furthermore, the PRC under Xi Jinping has been vocal about the US presence in the region which would make the PRC concessions in that regard seem unthinkable. Zhang makes two key statements in that regard; (1) Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping “has proven to be one of the most active in Chinese history” (2015), (2) the Chinese political elite and policymakers under Xi Jinping have become more vocal in expressing the Chinese intentions in the making of foreign policy (ibid.). Lastly, it treats geopolitical accommodation as ‘panacea’ to Sino-US relations that would erase all differences in the form of ‘grand bargain’. Also, the peaceful rise of China is not dependent on accommodation between the PRC and the US, but more in internal domestic development inside the PRC and more specifically in their values and identity, which I will return to later.

### **2.3. The peaceful rise of China, what it means and how it may happen**

While structural realism provides important points in analysing China’s rise such as seeking more influence and prominence in the region, how China rises is where this paper begs to differ. The common structural realist notion is that most great powers have clashed conflict with status quo power, such as Nazi-Germany and Imperial Japan. Therefore, China will surely challenge the US in a military conflict. This, however, may not be the case. As established above, China has been rising peacefully for the 30-or-so years. Additionally, as Buzan stated (2010), the US is often ignored as an example of a peaceful rise. While many would point out that the conditions in which the US became great power came about after two devastating world wars, a great power conflicts that were caused by Germany’s and Japan’s ambitions, it was not the US actions and aspirations that resulted in the world wars ultimately leading to American great power status. The US was the heavily protectionist economy and was reluctant to take charge in the interwar period. In a similar vein, the PRC’s rise was not based on great power conflict but in economic development and integration in the world economy. Buzan (2010) makes two good points in this view: (1) the rising US looked to engage the world economically rather than militarily, and (2) “military restraint heavily favoured economic development over the pursuit of the world-class military”. Surely these notions make Chinese rise seem peaceful compared to many other examples in history (Buzan 2010). Examples of the USSR, Germany and Japan certainly makes Mearsheimer point a reality

in which peaceful rise is impossible (Buzan 2010). Nonetheless, structural realists fail to explain American ascendance to world power and Chinese 30 years of peaceful rise.

Initially, the concept of the peaceful rise of China came into existence in the early 2000s. Theory of peaceful rise was designed to counter worries then prevalent in the West that the Chinese rise would destabilise the current world order (Zhang 2015). Zhang continues that this rise would be different from those of history due to Chinese efforts to seek a unique path to their rise (ibid.). Such an idea has also affected Chinese international relations (IR) literature and research in which need to address IR through the prism of ‘Chinese characteristics’ is often present. Focusing on these ‘Chinese characteristics’ is separating Chinese scholars from internationally recognised IR studies (Xinning 2010). He adds that concentrating too much on any specific Chinese characteristics is resulting in lack of any meaningful dialogue between Chinese and international IR researchers (ibid.). Such a critique of the ‘Chinese characteristics’ has helped Chinese thinking evolve. Certain groups of Chinese scholars are seeking ways to improve Chinese thought in a way that better contribute to the debate with the West. Xinning argues that such groups are not seeking unique characteristics, but rather traditional Chinese thought and philosophy that Western thinkers can understand (ibid.).

Under Xi Jinping’s leadership, the notion of a peaceful rise of China has changed after a more assertive foreign policy of Xi compared his predecessor. Zhang refers to Xi Jinping’s foreign policy as ‘peaceful rise 2.0’ in which core principals are the same, but the means are different (2015). He continues (ibid.): “By ‘peaceful rise 2.0’, I mean that while Beijing still adheres to its declared ‘peaceful development’ policy aiming at maintaining a stable external environment critical to China’s economic development, how it seeks to do so is rather different from past decades.”. Such a definition of the peaceful rise of China is vague but legitimate. By definition, Xi’s foreign policy has been relatively peaceful, despite increased assertiveness in its immediate neighbourhood. The PRC’s increased military expenditures have contributed to the Xi’s more aggressive foreign policy in the region. Zhang points out that it is often interpreted that peaceful rise does not necessarily mean an absence of any conflict at all (ibid.). Moreover, Xi Jinping has reiterated that “Not only should China adhere to the peaceful development road; but other countries must also commit themselves to the peaceful development road” (Xi Jinping quoted in Zhang 2015). From such a statement we can reach to a conclusion that the PRC is determined to maintain the peaceful road as long as other countries in cooperation do the same.

China as a rising power has not yet disturbed the order of the international society, but indeed maintains a possibility to challenge it. The Chinese potential to challenge the international order is partly based on its soft power and its alternatives. Qin Yaqing points out that the Chinese role as ‘a Westphalian non-democracy’ makes it more difficult for them to rise peacefully (2010). However, he continues that China is a ‘reformist revisionist’ who accepts some institutions which are based on the principles of mutual recognition of sovereignty and non-intervention (ibid.). China has not disturbed the order of international society in a sense that it accepts the very basis of the international society based on international organisations such as the UN for example instead of challenging them. The Chinese rise will certainly look aggressive if the criteria for the peaceful rise is only assigned based on the acceptance of Western values. Jyrki Kallio puts it well as he states that “from the Chinese perspective, the principal contradiction maybe between Chinese values and universal values” (2018). While ideological competition seems likely between China and the West, it should be pointed out that forming an argument between Chinese values and ‘universal values’ seem redundant. Surely democracy, respect for human rights and liberty are Western values, but there is very little room to claim them being universal values. The principles above of non-intervention, mutual recognition of sovereignty could very well maintain global value status, as there are virtually no debate or competition in this regard. This notion assigns meaning to the discussion of whether China is rising peacefully or not. This is because the UN is based on the very principles mentioned above, which is the key institution that China approves of.

Despite of the fact that the PRC is a permanent member of the UNSC, and at least in theory accepts the UN, it remains relatively passive in the UN and uses its seat to promote its domestic interests, and remains defensive about human rights, democracy, intervention and to an extent, about the environment (Buzan 2010). Much like the US before its ascendance, China is reluctant to take any responsibility towards international society. The PRC is also regarded by Buzan (like Yaqing) as ‘reformist revisionist’ in which China partly accepts the international institutions and resists and seeks to reform others to increase its status (ibid.). Buzan’s quote best illustrates this: “China accepts on an ideational basis the pluralist, coexistence institutions. It accepts at least instrumentally the market, resists the more politically liberal institutions, and wants to increase its status/rank” (ibid.). The lacking global legitimacy towards the Chinese system also implies that the PRC is hesitant to assert leadership itself (ibid.). Additionally, Chinese soft power is considerably lacking compared to the US, which makes the PRC more acceptive towards the institutions established by the US and the West. The PRC’s rise has benefitted from stability based on the US-led hegemony. It may have been why the PRC has been promoting harmony in its

discourse as it could not reach its goals of economic growth and modernisation through war and conflict (Sutter 2013, 190-191).

The peaceful rise of China seems possible and even likely given its past growth in the post-Cold War era. However, David Shambaugh (2013) points out, that the “Chinese rise is a double-edged sword: if China rise alongside with Western countries or ‘under the sponsorship of the UN’ or any other recognised international institution, it is likely that the West will be more-or-less acceptive of Chinese international activism” (2013, 272). He adds that if China decides to remain passive in contributing to global security, it may be accused of free-riding the international system (ibid.). Reflecting this to Buzan, it can be said that the PRC as a ‘revisionist reformist’ is rising peacefully, given its past, acceptance of the Westphalian norms and the UN, and economic interests which are greatly benefitted by the stability of the international system (2010). The threat of the rise of China seen in the West can be interpreted to have to do with ‘standard of civilisation’ in which view China is seen less civilised by the West (Zhang 2010). While there are risks of confrontation especially in the Taiwan Strait, it seems likely that PRC and more specifically the CCP, is not willing to risk gained success and economic modernisation by waging an armed conflict against the US.

The contemporary theoretical framework in the context of the Chinese rise, has long been dominated by the neorealist thinkers. Theorists such as Mearsheimer, Walt and Ross, treat the Chinese rise using neorealist logic that sees great power conflict between the PRC and the US inevitable. While neorealist assumptions such as pursue of power, security dilemma and the structure of IR provides important insights, they fail to answer key questions related to the Chinese rise. Secondly, the geopolitical accommodation in the given case is inadequate solution, largely because it neglects crucial elements in the Sino-American relations. Additionally, neorealist thinkers ignore the US as a prominent example and comparison of Chinese rise, which emphasises military restraint and economic development in the Sino-American relations.

### **3. DISCUSSION ON MAINLAND-TAIWANESE RELATIONS**

Given the peaceful rise of China, one question remains: how would peaceful rise of China translate into Mainland-Taiwanese relations? While the two have their troubled past, XXI century has so far proven to be relatively peaceful time between the two. The latest crisis that occurred in the Taiwan-strait in 1995-96 was in many ways' disaster for the PRC as well as for Taiwan and the US, as it showed concretely how volatile the situation truly is. While the latest crisis remains to be the crude reminder of the worst-case scenario, it has certainly increased the threshold for any provocative actions on either part. Arguably, this is particularly visible in a way in which the PRC handled Chen Shui-bian's administration in the wake of the new millennium. Chen Shui-bian took a more assertive stance towards the PRC during and after the presidential elections in 2004 when he and his colleagues rejected the idea of 'one China' treasured by Beijing (Sutter 2016, 157). The PRC stood clear on their stance: Anti-Secession law of 2005 meant that Beijing would not tolerate Taiwanese efforts towards separation (Sutter 2016, 158). Such law acted as a reminder that Beijing has not forgotten about Taiwan and considers it still as a matter of domestic in nature. While Chen's policies and leadership were not as hostile towards Beijing as Lee Teng-hui's, the PRC showed restraint in dealing with cross-strait relations by avoiding armed confrontation. This may be because, during the time of 2000-2005, the PRC was busy coming across as a peacefully rising power which ambitions would be jeopardised by any armed confrontation, especially against Taiwan.

The election of Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 can be seen as an example of how cross-strait relations would look like under peaceful Chinese rise. Ma Ying-jeou's ascendance to the presidency began a new era in the Mainland-Taiwanese relations not only reducing tensions in cross-strait relations but also reducing the salience of Taiwan question in Sino-American relations (Sutter 2013, 232). Ma's administration took priority in easing tensions with Beijing by enacting new policies but also by reversing some policies that were started by his predecessors (ibid.). As one could imagine, the PRC welcomed such changes by policies that were designed to bring the two closer together. Taiwanese economy became more dependent on close and cooperative relations with the mainland, and Ma stressed Beijing that his government is not going to make efforts towards separation and independence (Sutter 2016, 160). Overall the improvements were relatively quick and effective, considering the past riddled with quarrels and conflicts. The security concerns on both sides eased, Washington under Bush and Obama welcomed these changes wholeheartedly,

and commerce and institutional level cooperation between the PRC and Taiwan soared. A breakthrough for both sides was a free-trade agreement known as the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) that provided Taiwanese with ‘privileged’ access to Chinese markets (ibid.).

Internationally, Taiwan scored another breakthrough by participating in the annual World Health Assembly as an observer under the name ‘Chinese Taipei’. The PRC became the largest trading partner, the largest export market, and additionally the second largest source of imports (Sutter 2016, 162). Numbers-wise, trade between the two increased staggeringly: total trade in 2000 amounted in 31.3 billion dollars while in 2014 the number was 124.4 billion (ibid.). Politically, Ma made sure to keep his transits in the US soil discreet thus avoiding complicating Sino-American relations (ibid.). This is contradictory to Lee’s ‘pragmatic diplomacy’ and actions in the mid-1990s. While Ma Ying-jeou undeniably made great progress towards Mainland-Taiwanese détente and warmer relations, he remained under attack in domestic politics by vocal opposition (Sutter 2013, 232). Especially the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) remained against Ma’s ‘appeasement’ towards mainland China.

Moreover, despite Ma’s policies, the question of the US arms sales to Taiwan remained an issue for Beijing (ibid.). Sutter continues to sum the situation up well by arguing that “Taiwanese electorate and American policymakers reacted strongly to the extremes of Taiwan’s leaders in this period establishing momentum behind the recent development of relations, while China welcomes and endeavoured to influence recent turn of events” (2013, 233). This notion implies three things; the PRC remains pragmatic over cross-strait relations and maintains leverage over Taiwan in the form of trade and economy, Taiwanese domestic politics continues to be a critical factor in cross-strait relations, and lastly, the US seeks to loosen itself from its obligations towards Taiwan. Moreover, the future developments in cross-strait relations remain to be seen under Xi Jinping. While there might be worries about prospects of the PRC foreign policy under Xi Jinping, the change from Hu Jintao’s might not be as drastic and dramatic as many would assume (Blackwill, Campbell 2016). Though Xi has stressed the need to replace ‘weak’ politics of Hu administration, there has been continuity to his predecessor’s policies. One is the principle of ‘one-China’ (ibid.). Even despite these issues and challenges, Ma’s presidency was a good indication of how the peaceful rise of China would translate into Mainland-Taiwanese relations. However, the PRC and Taiwan specific perspectives need to be addressed to conclude that question.

For the PRC, the peaceful rise is contingent upon avoiding armed confrontation with the US. Therefore, to gain prestige over Taiwan, it needs to renew its strategy and power. Joseph Nye is correct in his article in which he argues that “the direct use of force for economic gain is generally too costly and dangerous for modern great powers.” (1990). As the role of traditional power and traditional use of force is decreasing, the PRC should improve and develop its soft power capabilities. As Joseph Nye puts it in his famous article of ‘soft power’, if the PRC manages to make Taiwan want what the PRC want, it has then successfully used “co-option or soft power in contrast with hard or command the power of ordering others to do what it wants.” (1990). In other words, the PRC should exercise cross-strait policies in which instead of coercing Taiwan ‘to do what the PRC wants’ it should make Taiwanese policymakers make the realisation themselves that détente and warm cross-strait relations are in the Taiwanese interest as well. So far as mentioned above, the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou has shown the Taiwanese the benefits from being on terms with Beijing. For the PRC it would be beneficial to maintain the current status of cross-strait relations instead of actively pursuing reunification. It is argued that China has increased the use of soft power not only throughout its history but also in recent years, which would imply that the PRC is not likely to use armed force to reach its goals (Xiang *et al.* 2015).

An essential part of the Chinese soft power and therefore its application towards Taiwan is the Chinese values and culture. The Chinese idea of ‘*Tianxia*’ meaning all under heaven, is often referred to as a “Chinese ideal for perpetual peace and to create compatibility to all peoples of all nations.” (Tingyang 2013). All under heaven combined with ‘the China dream’ are the backbone of Xi Jinping’s ambitious plan for soft power. Kallio provides another good definition of *Tianxia* by arguing that it is a “community of values rather than union by force.” (2018). By creating such value systems and ideas, the PRC is hoping to counter Western ideals by providing an alternative for other countries. So far, the PRC has been actively promoting its model for developing world as an alternative in which they can rely on. With such ideas of China dream and *Tianxia* the PRC has founded a basis on which they can start building on their soft power, which they can use to balance the Western ideals and American soft power. As mentioned above, the peaceful rise of China is contingent upon avoiding armed confrontation with the US. Therefore, for the PRC to gain prestige over Taiwan, they need to apply Chinese soft power. The ideas of China dream and ‘all under heaven’ combined with economic leverage and incentives the PRC maintains over Taiwan, it seems likely that peaceful rise of China is making Beijing look for alternative ways to influence Taiwan. However, it does not seem likely that the PRC and Xi Jinping especially has abandoned entirely the reunification or even Deng’s formula of ‘one country, two systems’ in

which one party system in the mainland and democracy in Taiwan would peacefully co-exist. The PRC has in several cases reiterated that every option is on the table, however with the peaceful rise, it is looking more likely that Beijing is offering Taipei carrot over a stick.

The debate over the Taiwanese status is going on among the scholars and researchers. For the Taiwanese, the question often revolves around three scenarios: (1) to unify with China, (2) to declare independence or lastly (3) to maintain the status quo. The first two options are highly unlikely, even undesirable to many, due to political divisions. In the post-Cold War world, Taiwan has seen mainly two types of governments, those more favourable to independence and those more favourable to cooperation with the mainland. Soon after Lee Teng-hui's presidency, a new political-centrist line started to appear in Taiwan (Chu 2012, 139). The late emergence of the political centre can be seen according to Chu, as a response to modern emerging China but also as a result of increased Chinese influence in Taiwanese export-based economy (ibid.) manifesting in Ma Ying-jeou's presidency which only consolidated the phenomena. However, this was not always the case as the presidency of Chen Shui-bian presented radical initiatives related to deceleration of independence. Chen held plans to hold a referendum that would allow the Taiwanese to "affirm Chen's two states in each side of the Strait formulation and demand China to withdraw ballistic missiles targeting the island." (Chu 2012, 141). With the pressure by George Bush and the US Congress, Chen was forced to adopt a "watered-down version" to reduce any risks for further provocation (ibid.).

The role of the US remains to be active in the Taiwanese question. As stated in the first part, the staunch ally on the Taiwanese side gives a strong argument in favour of the Taiwanese. While the US has been successful in the past defending Taiwan, there is currently strong opposition in the US towards the American commitments in the Taiwan Relations Act. One such example is the theory of 'grand bargain' by Glaser (2015) presented in this paper. Such need in the US to reassess support towards Taiwan comes from the need to enhance friendlier relations with China and eliminate risks for unnecessary conflicts. Another example of future Taiwanese status was presented in Sutter (2016) "Bruce Gilley argued in January 2010 that Taiwan's détente with China should seek neutralization along the lines of Finland's position in the Cold War and that such neutralization should be supported by the US; it would remove a major sore point in Sino-American relations." (2016, 165). While such a suggestion initially seems attractive, one has to bear in mind the fact that Finland had declared independence already in 1917 and was an internationally recognised sovereign state by the time of 1919. Taiwan, on the other hand, remains

to maintain more complex status as a former colony and sanctuary of a defeated nationalist government.

Mainland-Taiwanese relations remain to be challenged on both sides of the strait and also to the US as well. Relationships have become in a certain way more stable as there has not been an armed confrontation between the two in the scale that of the 1995-96 crisis. Moreover, it is fascinating to see that both the PRC and Taiwan has witnessed leaders from both spectrums from assertive to cooperative. In the PRC's case, such a leader would be Hu Jintao, though he is in the current narrative considered as a weak leader. In Taiwanese case, Ma Ying-jeou and his presidency was an example of a more cooperative leader in the Taiwanese side. Xi Jinping, the current leader of the PRC, is in many ways considered as strong and assertive leader which can be seen in his policies but also his image. For the Taiwanese, there is little doubt that examples of assertive leaders can be seen being Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian. What is especially remarkable is that neither side has seen assertive or cooperative leader on both sides at the same time. These observations matter, because the peaceful rise of China alone, cannot explain contemporary development in cross-strait relations.

However, the peaceful rise of China has contributed positively to cross-strait relations by creating incentives and economic carrots for the Taiwanese to cooperate with the mainland. The PRC seeks to use Chinese soft power and ideas of *Tianxia* and 'China dream' to continue to influence Taiwan. To what extent that will happen, remains unseen. Taiwanese has been throughout their history developing its own identity which has been affected by the turmoil in the 1950s and 1990s. Taiwanese identity will become more relevant when assessing cross-strait relations, because the identity plays an essential role in the Taiwanese domestic politics, often in DPP rhetoric. Chu points out, that number of people who are claiming exclusive Chinese identity has been decreasing steadily, and people who are claiming exclusive Taiwanese identity have been steadily increasing in the course of the early 21st century (2012, 141). Whether the peaceful rise of China affects Taiwanese identity is unlikely but how peaceful rise of China translates into Mainland-Taiwanese relations is that it keeps making the threshold for future conflict higher. For the Chinese, the application of soft power, essential now and after the peaceful rise, becomes an instrumentally more valuable tool. For the Taiwanese, the peaceful rise may ameliorate significant threats of forceful unification and offer Taiwanese opportunities to improve their economy and international prominence peacefully without major provocation including independence declaration.

## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis looked at China's rise and its effect on the delicate nature of Mainland-Taiwanese relations. The aim and purpose of this paper were to observe the sensitive nature of cross-strait relations through the prism of the peaceful rise of China. Prior embarking on this research I stated that the purpose of this paper is not to seek a solution to the question of Taiwan status but to look at possible development of the cross-strait relations merely. However, by this (and other related) research, the next logical step for possible future research would be analysing potential solutions to the issue of Taiwanese status. This research was conducted due to sheer importance and increased prominence of Chinese rise but also due to dominate discussions about the future of Sino-American relations, which again according to many, namely by prominent researchers such as Mearsheimer, Ross and Glaser, argue is leading to inevitable great power conflict between the US and the PRC. The Inspiration to research Taiwan and cross-strait relations as a case study came after research relating to Sino-American relations and fundamental problems between the two.

Embarking on to this research and topic, two hypotheses were set: (1) China's peaceful rise seems likelier than not, and (2) peaceful rise of China will draw the PRC and Taiwan closer together economically and politically. On this vein, two research questions were set; (1) is China rising peacefully or not, and (2) how will this dynamic affect the Mainland-Taiwan relations? Assessing these research questions, two methods for analysis were chosen; (1) critical analysis to evaluate structural realist arguments related to Chinese rise was chosen, and (2) discourse analysis was chosen to assess the second question of Chinese and Taiwanese discourse. To answer the first question, the peaceful rise of China means a situation where China manages to rise great power status without waging a great power war against the US. The likelihood was established using notions made by Buzan, Zhang and Yaqing. China as 'reformist revisionist' (Buzan 2010) accepts some Western-based international organisations that fit cherished Chinese values of sovereignty and non-intervention.

Additionally, the Chinese rise has been peaceful for 30 odd years and is looking similar to the US' rise to a great power status, unlike the neorealist notion and comparison of rises that of Japan and Germany. Based on this evidence, China's peaceful rise look likely, but unlike the US, China continues to emphasise rise on Chinese characteristics. The second research question was that how would by the now established peaceful rise of China translate into Mainland-Taiwanese relations.

Findings were that as China's peaceful rise is contingent upon avoiding armed conflict with the US, China needs to improve its soft power capabilities to influence Taiwan. It also seems that both economic and political cooperation between the two goes deeper using respective institutions and commerce; thus, creating a higher threshold for any provocative action between the two.

This paper was a broad observation of the peculiar dynamics of Mainland-Taiwanese relations through the prism of the peaceful rise of China. This research's strength was that assessing Mainland-Taiwanese relations through the lens of peaceful rise is relatively uncommon. Taiwan is heavily present in international relations literature regarding China which makes the Taiwan question scientifically interesting. Also, discussion and research regarding Chinese rise are in many ways being dominated by structural realists. The approach used here sheds light in specific previously disregarded points regarding Chinese rise, for example, similarities with American rise and also Chinese history as a context in which China has been rising peacefully. This research, however, had specific weaknesses as well. First, the broad nature of this paper made certain aspects seem overlooked. For example, the Chinese economy as a whole and the economic policies they have been practising and their effect to overall rise are generally beyond the scope of this paper and therefore overlooked. Moreover, the questions relating identities were generally disregarded not accounting for certain exceptions. However, assessing Chinese and Taiwanese identities using the constructivist approach would be a great prospect for research and natural next step in evaluating Mainland-Taiwanese relations.

In my view, this research was successful in answering the research questions set before the research. Despite specific weaknesses outlined above, I feel that the strengths of this thesis outweigh the gaps and provide a good overview of Mainland-Taiwanese relations through the prism of the peaceful rise of China. China and its rise will continue to maintain prominence in international relations and is therefore required to dedicate more research too. Not only does the understanding of Chinese rise help us better understand Taiwan and its status, but it also helps us better understand great power relations as a whole. As many realists often might point out, the rise of China will inevitably lead to a great power conflict. One could argue, that if we understand the Chinese rise, we better understand how to avoid history repeating itself. If done so, we might avoid seeing another Germany and Japan from happening, and that is, arguably, the main goal of international relations as an academic discipline.

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