

Xi Jinping Maintains Hardline on Taiwan

President Xi Jinping has reaffirmed China's commitment to a do-or-die Beijing foreign policy that risks U.S. – China relations.

By **Mathias Ssemanda**

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Chinese President Xi Jinping, speaking in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Sunday. (Wang Zhao/AFP/Getty Images)

President Xi Jinping emerged victorious from the just concluded 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, from which he secured a third term as the President of the People's Republic of China. On the first day of the Congress, Xi presented a progress report before the 2,378 delegates, which outlined several achievements his government has attained in the previous five years. He also outlined the challenges the Chinese government has encountered and will continue to counter in the years ahead. Taiwan, a self-governing island that Beijing says is an inherent part of China, has been part of Mr. Xi's challenges not only in the just-concluded five-year term but since 2012 when Xi became President of the People's Republic of China. Taiwan was under Japanese occupation from 1895 due to the defeat of China's reigning monarchy, the Qing dynasty. However, in 1945, Japan and the Republic of China, in a U.S.-led agreement, resolved to return Taiwan to the Republic of China after all Japan had lost in the Second World War. In 1949 when Mao Zedong's

communist party won the civil war, Kuomintang, who led the Republic of China, fled to Taiwan with his group that could later hold onto the island to form a defacto Chinese government.

In his address at the opening ceremony of the 20th Congress, Xi Jinping asserted that Taiwan would be reunified with Mainland China and did not rule out the use of force to achieve this objective. "We insist on striving for the prospect of peaceful reunification with the greatest sincerity and with the greatest efforts. However, we are not committed to abandoning the use of force and reserve the option to take all necessary measures," he said. On several occasions, the United States government has renounced Beijing's claims over Taiwan and has vowed to defend Taiwan's current status under the 1979 U.S. – Taiwan Relations Act. Whereas the Taiwan Relations Act binds the U.S. to the One China policy, its ambiguity has caused animosity between the two superpowers. Because its interpretation has not been consistent from one U.S. president to another, Beijing has lost patience over the Taiwan question. President Biden has, in media interviews, vowed a direct U.S. military intervention if Beijing uses force to take over Taiwan. Although the U.S. Department of Defense has walked back on Biden's remarks, they have angered Beijing and put the two countries in challenging positions. Xi Jinping has made reunification with Taiwan his most important foreign policy issue for the past six years, and it's expected to increase now that he is attaining the controversial third term.

Because of the propaganda and highly controlled state media, Chinese citizens within China also approach the Taiwan issue with a nationalistic attitude. Following the recent U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Taiwan, Chinese citizens took to social media and encouraged Xi Jinping to invade Taiwan. However, people of Chinese descent living abroad, particularly in the United States, have repeatedly watered-down President Xi's claims over Taiwan. Edward Hu, 24, Mahwah, NJ, who came to the U.S. at the age of thirteen to join his parents and has since been a U.S. citizen, disagrees with Xi Jinping's foreign policy on Taiwan. Mr. Hu draws from events in Hong Kong to disregard Xi's claims. "I do not want him to conquer Taiwan; I do not want him to take over Taiwan. He will do the same as he did in Hong Kong," said Mr. Hu. Edward Hu, like most Chinese living abroad, believes that Taiwan is an inherent part of China but prefers the status quo between the two countries. "I do not want Taiwan to be independent because it is part of China. But I do not want Xi to take over Taiwan," he said. Taiwanese citizens share cultural and historical ties between them and the Chinese people. Unlike President Putin's claims over the Ukrainian people, there are so many

shared traits between the people of Taiwan and the Chinese. Mandarin Chinese is not only the official language in Taiwan but also the primarily spoken native language, in addition to the historical family and cultural ties the Taiwanese people have with their counterparts from Mainland China.

The United States has increasingly rallied its allies to defend Taiwan and discourage aggression from the People's Republic of China. When asked about his opinion on Taiwan's relations with China, Darren Chan, a Canadian citizen, said the Taiwanese people must be left to determine their destiny. "It's their right, and it's their country. They should be left to decide whether to join China or not," said Mr. Chan. President Biden has increasingly signaled a direct U.S. military intervention, but some Americans believe the United States should avoid a war between the U.S. and China over Taiwan. Most Americans derive their frustration with U.S. military interventions from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars that cost Americans financially and the lives of military personnel. Mr. Justice, 22, State College, PA, said it is not America's role to police the world. "So many people die when we go to war. It needs to stop."

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