

## PROJECTION OF TAIWAN STRAIT STABILITY DURING PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP'S ADMINISTRATION

1

Rizki Roza<sup>1</sup> & Devindra Ramkas Oktaviano<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*In November 2024, the United States (U.S.) approved a USD385 million arms transfer to Taiwan, an agreement that drew significant attention to escalating tensions between the US, Taiwan, and China, especially as the U.S. entered President Donald Trump's second administration. This paper examines the stability of the Taiwan Strait during Trump's administration. By analyzing Trump's leadership track record, campaign promises, and the dynamics of his cabinet formation, the paper predicts the trajectory of his foreign policy toward the Taiwan Strait. Although Trump has shifted the narrative from democratic solidarity to a transactional, profit-driven approach to addressing the Taiwan issue, the potential for instability in the Taiwan Strait persists. The involvement of major powers, the proliferation of advanced weaponry, and intensive trade interdependencies heighten the stakes of any conflict in the Taiwan Strait, with serious implications for regional security and prosperity, including Indonesia. Commission I of the DPR RI needs to advocate for Indonesia's proactive role in maintaining regional stability and fostering dialogue among all stakeholders to mitigate the risks of conflict.*

### Introduction

On November 29, 2024, the United States (U.S.) Department of State approved the sale of two arms packages to Taiwan, valued at USD385 million. According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) of the U.S. Depart-

ment of Defense, the package includes spare parts and support services for F-16 fighter aircraft, AESA (Active Electronically Scanned Array) radar systems, and equipment for advanced mobile customers (Shakil, 2024).

<sup>1</sup> Associate Legislative Analyst in the Field of Political, Legal, and Security at the Center for Parliamentary Analysis, Expertise Agency of DPR RI, e-mail: rizki.roza@dpr.go.id

<sup>2</sup> Junior Legislative Analyst in the Field of Political, Legal, and Security at the Center for Parliamentary Analysis, Expertise Agency of DPR RI, e-mail: devindra.oktaviano@dpr.go.id



China strongly condemned this decision, viewing it as a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity. In response, on December 5, 2024, China imposed sanctions on 13 companies and six executives from five U.S. defense firms (Lee, 2024). These tensions have escalated alongside China's intensified military campaigns in the Taiwan Strait, particularly following multiple arms transfers from the U.S. to Taiwan during President Joe Biden's administration.

With President-elect Donald Trump set to assume office on January 20, 2025, and having already outlined a cabinet draft, the direction of U.S. foreign policy in the Taiwan Strait region remains a critical concern. The involvement of major powers, the proliferation of advanced weaponry, and the deep interdependence of regional trade relations mean that any conflict in the Taiwan Strait would have serious implications for regional security and prosperity, including Indonesia.

This article projects the stability of the Taiwan Strait during Donald Trump's second term and explores its potential implications. It is intended to serve as a reference for Commission I of DPR RI in encouraging the Indonesian government to actively contribute to maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

### **Taiwan's Military Strength Development**

Taiwan positions itself as a sovereign democratic nation with the right to defend its territory, including through military capabilities. To prepare for potential am-

phibious assaults – characterized by troop landings preceded by sea and air attacks, Taiwan has equipped itself with advanced weapons such as Abrams tanks, Patriot missiles, and F-16 fighter jets. In early August 2024, President Lai Ching-Te announced a 6 percent increase in defense spending for 2025, amounting to 657 billion Taiwan dollars (USD19.74 billion), or approximately 2.5 percent of GDP (Lee, 2024).

Under the leadership of the previous president, Tsai Ing-Wen, Taiwan implemented significant military reforms. These include extending mandatory military service from four months to one year, constructing domestically built submarines, enhancing asymmetric warfare capabilities, and reorganizing reserve forces (Sacks, 2024). Taiwan also conducts regular combat readiness exercises independently and in collaboration with other countries.

China, maintaining its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan, has responded with consistent efforts to bolster its military capabilities under President Xi Jinping. China's maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait have grown increasingly aggressive and provocative. In late October 2024, China conducted its second major military exercise, deploying 153 aircraft, 14 ships, and 12 government vessels in the Taiwan Strait. On December 9, 2024, Taiwan raised its alert status to "high" after China stationed nearly 90 warships and coast guard vessels in waters surrounding Taiwan and restricted airspace over these areas ("Taiwan raises alert," 2024).

Taiwan's efforts to strengthen its military and China's assertive responses present significant challenges to regional peace and sta-

bility. The potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait poses a greater risk to Indonesia than the Russia-Ukraine war. This is due to Indonesia's proximity to the region, its reliance on Taiwan, the U.S., and China as major trading partners, and nearly 300,000 Indonesian citizens residing in Taiwan.

### Donald Trump Policy Projections

For over four decades, U.S. foreign policy toward Taiwan has been grounded in the Three Joint Communiqués (1972, 1979, 1982), the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, and the Six Assurances (1982). These documents form the foundation for the U.S. to maintain economic, security, and cultural relations with Taiwan despite not granting it diplomatic recognition (*de jure*) under the One China Policy. The TRA provides the legal basis for the U.S. to supply Taiwan with defensive weapons and services, enabling Taiwan to independently defend itself (Yuan, 2023).

Since 1979, the U.S. has been Taiwan's largest arms supplier. The highest value of U.S. arms transfers to Taiwan occurred during Donald Trump's first administration (2016–2020), reaching USD15 billion. Trump approved 11 arms packages, including 66 F-16V fighter jets, drones, and missiles. This exceeded the total USD14 billion in arms transfers during President Obama's eight-year tenure. Trump-era defense diplomacy also encompassed routine consultations, training of Taiwanese military officers in U.S. institutions, participation of U.S. personnel in Taiwanese military exercises, and support for weapons

procurement (Yuan, 2023). Despite these close security ties, the U.S. has refrained from placing military assets on Taiwanese soil.

On October 25, 2024, the Biden administration approved arms sales to Taiwan, including National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) worth USD1.16 billion and radar systems valued at USD828 million. Notably, NASAMS, tested during the Russia-Ukraine war, was transferred to Taiwan for the first time. Additionally, the U.S. has consistently deployed warships and fighter jets through the Taiwan Strait, most recently on November 26, 2024 (“Jet tempur patroli,” 2024).

Donald Trump's track record and statements indicate a transactional foreign policy approach, emphasizing business interests (Casado, 2024). His campaign rhetoric in Taiwan diverged from Biden's policies. Trump proposed that Taiwan allocate up to 10 percent of its GDP to defense and pay a “guarantee fee” to the U.S., akin to an insurance premium (“Taiwan's Lai says,” 2024). He also accused Taiwan of undermining the U.S. semiconductor industry and threatened import tariffs on Taiwanese chips, criticizing the Biden-era CHIPS and Science Act, which provides incentives for semiconductor companies, including Taiwan's TSMC, to establish factories in the U.S. (“Donald Trump tuduh,” 2024). Furthermore, Trump claimed he would not need U.S. military forces to defend Taiwan, asserting that Xi Jinping “respected” him (Loh et al., 2024).

Trump's lack of interest in democratic solidarity suggests he may hesitate to commit significant

U.S. resources to Taiwan. However, reflecting on his first administration, he could still increase military support for Taiwan if it aligns with U.S. defense industry interests, pressuring Taiwan to raise its defense spending (Satake, 2024).

Trump's cabinet nominations reveal a firm stance on China. Secretary of State nominee Marco Rubio authored the "Taiwan Peace Through Strength Act" as a senator in 2023. While in the U.S. House of Representatives, National Security Advisor nominee Michael Waltz advocated for accelerating arms shipments to Taiwan to counter China (Casado, 2024). While Trump might downplay bilateral ties with Taiwan, his administration's tougher stance on China could exacerbate tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

### Conclusion

President Donald Trump is unlikely to ease tensions in the Taiwan Strait. While his campaign promises may not materialize fully, the potential for escalating tensions remains, and the region's security dynamics will continue to have serious implications for Indonesia's security and prosperity.

Commission I of DPR RI needs to encourage the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to actively promote peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait by urging all parties to exercise restraint and prioritize dialogue. Furthermore, Commission I can recommend that MOFA and the Ministry of Defense develop a contingency plan to address potential scenarios if tensions escalate into open armed conflict.

Through parliamentary diplomacy, DPR RI can also utilize a

second-track diplomacy approach to contribute to reducing tensions in the Taiwan Strait, demonstrating Indonesia's commitment to regional stability and peace.

### References

- Casado, J. A. R. (2024, November 18). Trump 2.0 and the future of the Taiwan Strait conflict. *TheDiplomat.com*. <https://thediplomat.com/2024/11/trumps-return-and-the-future-of-the-taiwan-strait-conflict/>
- Donald Trump tuduh Taiwan pencuri, tebar ancaman jika menang. (2024, October 29). *CNBCIndonesia.com*. <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com/tech/20241029091013-37-583799/donald-trump-tuduh-taiwan-pencuri-tebar-ancaman-jika-menang>
- Jet tempur patroli Angkatan Laut Amerika Serikat lewati Selat Taiwan. (2024, November 26). *Tempo.co*. <https://www.tempo.co/internasional/jet-tempur-patroli-angkatan-laut-amerika-serikat-lewati-selat-taiwan--1173430>
- Lee, L. & Cao, E. (2024, December 5). China slaps sanctions on 13 US military firms over Taiwan arms sale. *Reuters.com*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-slaps-sanctions-13-us-military-firms-over-taiwan-arms-sale-2024-12-05/>
- Lee, Y. (2024, August 6). Taiwan's defence budget will hit new record next year, president says. *Reuters.com*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwans-2025-defence-budget-reach-new-high-1974-bln-president-says-2024-08-06/>

- Loh, M., Tan, K. W. K., & Teh, C. (2024, November 9). Trump said Taiwan should pay for US protection. Here's what a second Trump term could mean for the island. *BusinessInsider.com*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/what-second-trump-term-could-mean-for-taiwan-2024-11>
- Sacks, D. (2024, August 9). *Taiwan's latest defense budget risks falling further behind China*. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/taiwans-latest-defense-budget-risks-falling-further-behind-china>
- Satake, H. (2024, December 3). Trump puts Taiwan on the tightrope. *EastAsiaForum.org*. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2024/12/03/trump-puts-taiwan-on-the-tightrope/>
- Shakil, I. (2024, November 30). US approves \$385 mln arms sale to Taiwan. *Reuters.com*. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us-state-dept-approves-potential-sale-f-16-spare-parts-taiwan-pentagon-says-2024-11-30/>
- Taiwan raises alert to 'high' amid presence of Chinese warships. (2024, December 9). *AlJazeera.com*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/12/9/taiwan-raises-alert-to-high-amid-presence-of-chinese-warships>
- Taiwan's Lai says 'confident' of deeper cooperation with Trump. (2024, December 6). *Channel-NewsAsia.com*. <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/east-asia/taiwan-lai-ching-te-visits-palau-china-fumes-pacific-tour-4790741>
- Yuan, J. (2023). The United States and stability in the Taiwan Strait. *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 79(2), 80-86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2023.2178176>