

“If The United States clings to its erroneous decision on the basis of miscalculation of the situation, it will inevitably cause severe damage to Sino-US relations, in that case, the US Administration should bear all the consequences”

The New York Times dated 24<sup>th</sup> may,1995 published the statement made by the Chinese foreign ministry under the headline China demands the US cancel visit by Taiwan’s President. The famed Taiwan crisis of 1996 was in making, which would see the Taiwanese President visit The US, Beijing conducting military exercises in the Taiwan Strait and US sending carrier groups to deter aggression. Such an event didn’t have a parallel in history until yesterday

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to the island nation of Taiwan amidst ‘strong warnings’, ‘mud slinging’ and exacerbated tension has no parallel in recent history. Rightly termed as historic in the sense it became a stark departure from tacit support to an overt acknowledgement of the bonhomie between Taiwan and The US. It was the highest level visit in 25 years.



Image source: Taiwan TV

The visit has and will have many ramifications in the days to come. The United States calling out the Chinese bluff on the face is the biggest takeaway from Pelosi's visit. After a big bruise in Kabul to its hegemony, where naysayers prematurely concluded the demise of pax Americana, this visit is a shot in the arm of the US effectively re-establishing its might as a single sole hegemon. The famed 'indispensable nation' could still call the shots according to its own will, the perception of infallibility that took a hit last year got some repair. No matter its strength, China is still more Deng's bide your time than Xi's middle kingdom.

China is expected to retaliate. The military might of Beijing today is no match with that of 1996. It boasts of an unmatched military might unheard in its civilizational history. Although, With a slowing economy directly attributed to President Xi Jinping, the path to his third term might become perilous, in such a precarious situation it cannot be seen being bullied by The US, an ode to the past which is chronically painful to many Chinese. Its heightened ban on Taiwanese airspace and conducting military exercises in close proximity with the Taiwanese territory is more for domestic consumption. On the flip side, it could spark a crisis that can metastasise into a full-blown conflict.

What effect it might have on Sino-US relations? For many critics of the speaker's visit, this would unnecessarily exacerbate tensions between the two without an actual follow-up by both. The interwovenness of complex interdependence axiomatically establishes that neither Beijing nor Washington can do much beyond a point without a cataclysmic change in their approach which neither a tepid Xi nor a reluctant Joe would do.



Image source: Bloomberg

Although geopolitically, it would divide the world a bit more. The Russian side is to gain the most, with China further drifting away from US and the war in Ukraine not going anywhere soon, the Beijing-Moscow axis can materialise and solidify further. The #StandWithChina hosted by the Russian foreign ministry is certainly a small but strong manifestation of the same.

The crisis for that matter also exposed Beijing's standing in the world. A regime that attempts to displace The US as the Numero Uno state had few takers to back its claim up. The coterie of Russia, North Korea, Pakistan and Iran support is all that the regime got, again a big boost for Pax Americana.

Beneficiary and losers? The biggest beneficiary is certainly The US and in particular, the democratic party which faces a barrage of questions over domestic problems in the incoming midterms. It certainly will add to the foreign policy success of an embittered

president who doesn't have a foreign policy success to tout.

The second beneficiary or so to say boost of confidence would be the ASEAN nations who are expected to have been watching this visit closely. The nation of Japan with the growing clamour of rewriting its pacifist constitution also would heave a sigh of relief with the much-needed posturing by The US.

Well, I wouldn't use the term loser, as in the international space, one event rarely defines a victor but so to say Beijing's inability to not match its 'army will not sit idly-by' and 'shooting the plane' rhetoric with action pushes it on the side of not winning. It might retaliate once Xi gets a third term or in long run bring Russia and China closer in a military alliance, we have to see.

Where does India stand in this quagmire? India certainly had a moment of relief when Pelosi touched down in Taipei. As a functional and practising democracy, India is certainly more comfortable with the west and west-led order than it can ever be with the Chinese-led system. However, as the world gets more divided, it would be further pushed to choose sides, an act it is not that comfortable with. With Russia and The US pushing away and Beijing drifting along with Moscow, the odds are tilted. The middle powers like India could be pushed to make a choice soon.

Pelosi's visit certainly altered the course of the foreign policy of many nations, whether it alters the course of history remains to be seen. In no uncertain terms, it is an unprecedented visit, a visit like never before!

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