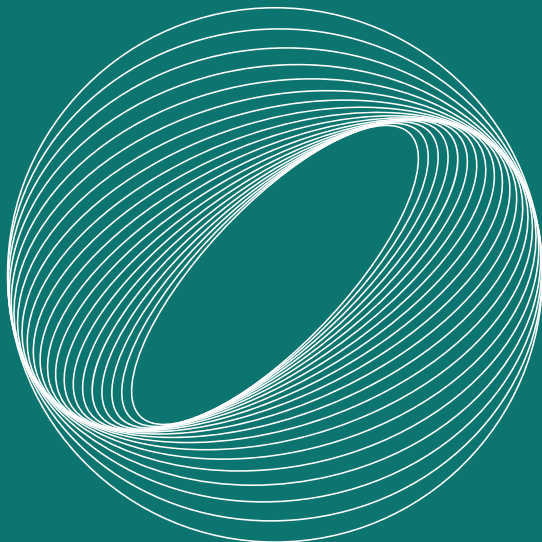




Institute of
International
Studies
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UNIVERSITY OF CALicut



FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW #66

1 MARCH – 15 MARCH 2024

CHINA AND THE AFTERMATH OF TAIWAN'S ELECTION

On January 13th, the fate of Taiwan was determined through the presidential and legislative elections. As expected, China decided to take this matter into its own hands by strengthening the reunification narrative with the mainland in Taipei. China's strategy regarding military tactics and non-military offences could generally be observed to pressure the voters. Aircraft, naval vessels, and balloons were deployed, crossing the unofficial maritime border between the two (Yang, 2024). Besides, various cyber-warfare tactics, such as hoaxes and misinformation, were spread on social media to manipulate public opinion toward Taiwanese officials and to indoctrinate the swing voters (Wu, 2024). One might say it is more of a speculation, but Xi Jinping's statement is another formidable piece of evidence supporting China's case. In the New Year's speech, he accentuated that both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose, sharing the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Taiwan Affairs Office also called for peaceful unification between China and Taiwan.

Eventually, more than China's efforts were needed to entirely change the perspective of the Taiwanese about the idea of reunification. After the election, half the population wants to maintain the status quo indefinitely or move toward independence (Thomson, 2024). Thus, the outcome was unfavourable to Beijing as the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) reigns for another four years (Yuqun, 2024). As a response, Beijing has navigated several diplomatic moves that could impact Taiwan, such as establishing relations with Nauru, which previously supported Taiwan (Hart et al., 2024). In addition, there were 24 PLA aircraft patrolling unusually around Taiwan just a few days after the election (Xuanzun, 2024). Now, all eyes focus on the strait, watching how the political dynamics will play out for the next four years. **(Rachel Emeraldal Pasaribu, HI UGM 2021).**

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COMPLEX SECURITY CHALLENGES IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA: A PERSPECTIVE

In contemporary times, the impact of climate change is increasingly undeniable. From the subtle shifts in weather patterns observed over the years to the current unpredictability, the tangible effects of climate change are becoming more pronounced. (Climate Change Widespread, Rapid, and Intensifying – IPCC, 2021). However, in the Global South, particularly in the Philippines, even with the impending threats of climate change, external pressures persist, such as intimidation in its waters.

Central to this dynamic is the contentious issue of sovereignty in the South China Sea, where historical claims, notably China's assertion of its 'Nine-Dash Line,' intersect with contemporary tensions. On March 5, the Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) deployed water cannons toward a civilian ship commandeered by the Philippine Navy, laden with fresh provisions for troops stationed at the BRP Sierra Madre in Ayungin (Lopez, 2024). Further exacerbating the situation, since 2015, National Scientist Dr. Gomez highlighted that apart from establishing military bases in the West Philippine Sea, the repeated poaching of giant clam shells, corals, and other marine species by Chinese fishing vessels has significantly disrupted the area's ecological equilibrium (Republic of the Philippines, 2015).

The ecological disruptions caused by climate change, including the continuous poaching of marine species and the destruction of coral reefs, further exacerbate existing security challenges in the South China Sea. Climate-induced environmental stressors can intensify competition over scarce resources and increase the risk of conflicts, highlighting the interconnectedness of environmental security and traditional security concerns. These security challenges require comprehensive approaches that integrate climate resilience, diplomatic efforts, and cooperative security measures within a framework of international cooperation and multilateralism.

In the context of the Global South, these developments pose significant challenges, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and compounding the impacts of climate change on communities and ecosystems. The intertwining of environmental, geopolitical, and security concerns underscores the urgent need for coordinated action and multilateral cooperation to address the complex challenges facing the region. (Arianne Joy Fabregas, Arellano University School of Law).

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DMFI MOVEMENT: ILLUMINATING THE PATH FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS AND WELFARE IN INDONESIA

On February 1, 2024, animal welfare activists, coordinated by Dog Meat Free Indonesia (DMFI), staged a rally in front of the Parliament building in Senayan, Jakarta, urging for a ban on the dog meat trade in Indonesia (DMFI, 2024; Pandu, 2024). This action was built upon previous local-level movements that successfully led to the prohibition of consuming pet meat in some regions, namely Semarang and Bali (Pandu, 2024).

This action is essential to improving the quality of animal welfare in Indonesia. According to the Animal Protection Index assessment in 2020, Indonesia scored an E, with A being the best and G being the worst. Zali (2018) also highlighted in his research that the animal welfare principles in Indonesia are deterred by the nation's cruel culture towards animals. So, Indonesia needs to fix this issue immediately. Improving the quality of animal welfare can be done by spreading the idea to the community without burdening the country's economy. This action has shown a glimpse of hope as it proves that the idea of animal welfare is growing in Indonesia. Activists see that animals have rights just like humans and deserve to be protected (Resolute, 2016). This action is aimed at urging new laws but shaping a new identity in society could be the next goal of this action and put this awareness at the "tipping point" where the idea will spread after 1/3 of the population adopts it (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998; Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

The movements undertaken by DMFI activists exemplify one of numerous initiatives to advocate for justice and compassion towards all living beings. Their advocacy may bring about a new paradigm of equality in animal-human relations. The grand dreams of these activists still face a rocky road, making it necessary for broader participation to be engaged and for us to live as equals with other beings. (Achmad Fauzan Rafi, HI UGM 2021).

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