

Parallel Perceptions: Divergent Perspectives of the United States and China on the Taiwan Issue and Risky Implications

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Abstract

The intensifying rivalry between the United States and China on the Taiwan issue has led to escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait. The growing divergence in their strategic perceptions of this issue has been indispensable in shaping Taiwan-related policymaking. The United States predominantly views the Taiwan issue through the lenses of geopolitical security, ideological dichotomy, and great power competition. In contrast, China primarily considers it as a matter of sovereignty and territorial integrity, a domestic issue for “a family shared by cross-strait Chinese,” and a crucial milestone in achieving national rejuvenation through reunification. These divergent strategic perceptions, running almost in parallel, have given rise to contrasting and usually conflicting political narratives, policy-making logic, and policy behaviors pertaining to Taiwan. Consequently, the inherent reciprocal misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and animosity stemming from these parallel perceptions have hindered the possibility of reaching a consensus to navigate the turbulence and manage the controversial Taiwan issue between the two countries.

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