
Italian missionary in Taipei: "Our situation cannot be compared to Ukraine's, but there are concerns"

"Our situation does not compare to Ukraine's, because there is no interest in starting a war now. Taiwan's economy largely depends on semiconductor chip manufacturing. Millions are being invested towards fast-tracking nanotechnology research. This area of research takes time, and time does not contemplate a war. There is certainly widespread concern, and it is hoped that the military drills will end soon", says a source who requested to remain anonymous. The person speaking to SIR is an Italian missionary who has been living and serving in Taiwan's capital city for the past 30 years. As he is speaking, Chinese fighter jets and ships crossed the "median line" of the Strait several times on the second day of large-scale military drills staged by an irate China in response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei.

According to military sources, 22 Chinese military aircraft entered Taiwan's air defence zone, crossing the median line of the Taiwan-China Strait. These included 12 Sukhoi Su-30 fighter jets, six Shenyang J-11 fighter jets and two Shenyang J-16 fighter jets. In response, the Taiwanese military activated its missile defence systems and scrambled fighter jets. "We are closely following the news concerning military drills taking place offshore, in the sea space near China, with provocative incursions", the missionary reported. "Military aircraft have entered Taiwan's air defence zone several times. This means not over the island but around it, towards the Philippines and Japan. Therefore the atmosphere is definitely tense and although Taiwan is the target, Japan has also intervened and protested." Angered by Japan's criticism of China's manoeuvres around Taiwan, the Chinese Foreign Ministry summoned the Japanese ambassador to lodge a formal protest.

People in Taipei and on the island continue working and leading their normal everyday lives. "I too think that no one has an interest in precipitating the situation now," notes the missionary. "In my opinion it's a show of military muscles. Even China's president has no interest in stirring murky waters. He seeks a third term in power, but it will require an amendment in the Constitution, while tensions are rising with regard to the various party lines." Taiwan has historically served as a 'testing ground' for China's security and strength. Reunification is one of its long-term goals. It would represent a consecration for both President Xi Jinping and the Chinese Communist Party. However, any attempt to obtain it by force would be very costly and could even jeopardise the very survival of the CCP regime if the military operation failed. "I do hope - remarks the missionary – that what is happening now in Taiwan's seas and skies is not an operation meant to deflect attention from China's internal woes, but it should be remembered that in China losing face is a serious business, and Pelosi's visit to the island must have upset many." Also because such a high-level visit represents a formal, de facto recognition of the sovereignty of the host country. And this is utterly intolerable for the Chinese giant. The missionary describes the population's attitude during these hours of tension, but even in this case the picture is rather complex. "The elderly who came here from China are all dead now. They wished to return to China, because they had left their families and there was a longing for kinship. Their children settled in Taiwan. They built their future here and are now in their sixties. Their grandchildren have almost all emigrated. Taiwan served as a springboard to move to other world countries. There are some young people in the parish, but those over 30 have left."

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