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THE RISK REPORT BY IAN BREMMER

# How to weigh the risks of a crisis over Taiwan

IN JANUARY, TAIWAN WILL HOLD a presidential election. China's leaders hope former New Taipei City mayor Hou Yu-ih, candidate of the Kuomintang opposition party, will win the job, but the smart money is on current Vice President William Lai, who represents the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Lai and his party favor a tougher approach to Beijing. If Lai wins, Beijing will become much more confrontational in the coming months.

A Chinese invasion of Taiwan remains highly unlikely, but a deterioration in relations is bad news for both sides.

For now, Beijing is wielding both sticks and carrots to influence Taiwan's voters. China's navy recently conducted its largest-ever military exercises in the western Pacific, but Beijing has also announced a plan to develop China's Fujian province into a "demonstration zone" for integrated economic development with Taiwan.

This good cop, bad cop strategy probably won't work. Recent polling suggests that about three-quarters of Taiwan's 24 million people now consider themselves Taiwanese rather than Chinese, whatever their family history—a sharp jump over the past 10 years. Some of that trend is likely the natural product of generational change. But China's crackdown on the democracy-rights movement in Hong Kong in 2020 has played a role in that shift too.

Meanwhile, Taiwan's DPP leaders are looking beyond the election toward the more

threatening approach from China. Their latest pushback comes in the form of a new defense report they hope will make China think harder about a future invasion. On Sept. 12, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense released its National Defense Report 2023, which details the lessons Taiwan has learned from Russia's war on Ukraine. In particular, the report calls for bolstering Taiwan's asymmetric-warfare capabilities, including the acquisition of "mobile, cost-effective, portable, and AI-enabled" weapons and equipment.

## Beijing is wielding both sticks and carrots to influence Taiwan

China has also learned lessons from the war in Ukraine. Its leaders recognize that an enemy fighting for its land can make territorial gain prohibitively expensive for the invader, and that Western powers are more likely to align than to divide in the face of naked military aggression. It should also be clear for now that Beijing badly needs to focus its current attention and resources on domestic challenges.

Over the longer term, China's President Xi Jinping remains determined to reincorporate Taiwan into China by any means necessary, and he'll respond forcefully to any moves he considers foreign interference in this mission. But Beijing also understands that Washington has domestic challenges too and will not welcome any pro-independence push by anyone in Taiwan for the foreseeable future. That gives Beijing time to wait for better conditions for decisive action against the island's autonomy.

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*Is it... Should China invade Taiwan now? What is the benefit and what is the risks?*



BEYONCÉ'S WARM  
AND RADICAL INCLUSION

UKRAINE DISPLAYS  
THE FUTURE OF WARFARE

CHINA WATCHES  
TAIWAN'S ELECTIONS

INSIDE


To fully understand the deep roots of the toxic blend of ethno-religious identity politics known today as white Christian nationalism, we need to go back at least to 1493—not the year Christopher Columbus “sailed the ocean blue,” but the year he returned to a hero’s welcome in Spain, bringing with him gold, brightly colored parrots, and nearly a dozen captive Indigenous people. ◀

BY ROBERT P. JONES

# GOODBYE, COLUMBUS,

SOCIETY

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# The View





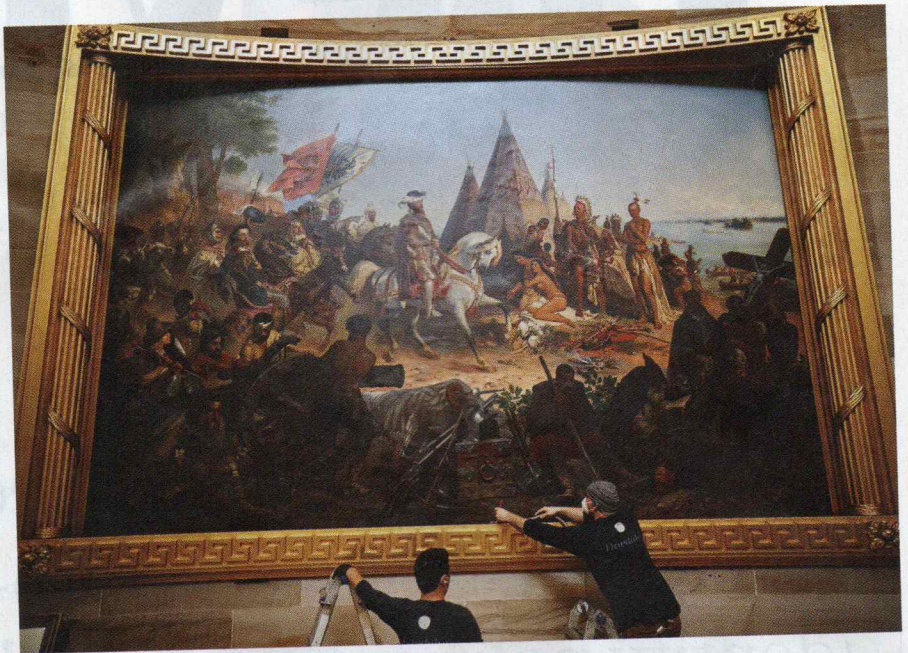
This article is about giving deeper context for why Jan 6, 2021 = Trump issue  
The Author then thinks the world should re-visit (deeply) from 1493 (discovery of USA by Columbus)

The return of Columbus also precipitated one of the most fateful theological developments in the history of the western Christian church: the creation of what has come to be known as the Doctrine of Discovery. Established in a series of 15th century papal bulls, the doctrine claims that European civilization and western Christianity are superior to all other cultures, races, and religions.

The Doctrine of Discovery merged the interests of European imperialism, including the African slave trade, with Christian missionary zeal. While the doctrine has escaped scrutiny by most white scholars and theologians, Indigenous people and scholars of color have long been testifying to these Christian roots of white supremacy, while dying from and living with their damaging effects.

As I've continued my own journey of re-education over the past 10 years, I have come to consider the Doctrine of Discovery as a kind of Rosetta Stone for understanding the deep structure of the European political and religious worldviews we have inherited in this country. It furnished the foundational lie that America was "discovered" and enshrined the noble innocence of "pioneers" in the story we, white Christian Americans, have told about ourselves. Ideas such as Manifest Destiny, America as a city on a hill, or America as a new Zion all sprouted from the seed that was planted in 1493. This sense of divine entitlement, of European Christian chosenness, has shaped the worldview of most white Americans and thereby influenced key events, policies, and laws throughout American history.

The contemporary currency of this worldview is reflected in the telling results of a 2023 Christian Nationalism Survey, conducted by PRRI in partnership with the Brookings Institution, which asked: Do you agree or disagree that "God intended America to be a new promised land where European Christians could create a society that could be an example to the rest of the world"? While only 3 in 10 Americans agreed, majorities of Republicans (52%) and white evangelical Protestants (56%) affirmed it. Moreover, the



Cleaning up after rioters in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda on Jan. 12, 2021

survey found that among white Americans today, this belief in America as a divinely ordained white Christian nation—one that has blessed so much brutality in our history—is strongly linked to denials of structural racism, anti-immigrant sentiment, anti-semitism, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment, support for patriarchal gender roles, and even support for political violence.

**IS AMERICA** a divinely ordained promised land for European Christians, or is America a pluralistic democracy where all stand on equal footing as citizens? Most Americans embrace the latter vision. But a desperate, defensive, mostly white Christian minority continue to cling to the former, lately in the form of Trumpism and the "Make America Great Again" movement. It was reflected in the prayers and religious symbols participants carried at the U.S. Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021, and it has become central to the trajectory of the contemporary Republican Party, two-thirds of whom identify as white and Christian.

The contemporary white Christian nationalist movement flows directly from a cultural stream that has run through this continent for

five centuries. In many ways, this truth has always been glaringly apparent. But for those of us who are white and Christian, our precarious position has historically required that we remain vigilantly ignorant of our own origin story while demanding the acquiescence of others. Fragmented narratives demarcate America's "Indian problem" and "Negro problem" as distant islands, neither visible from the shores of the other. But if we do the hard work of pushing upriver, we find, at the headwaters, the white Christian problem.

We need a moral imagination that is not amnesiac, one that will hold on to the memory of the systemic injustices that have accrued to Black and Indigenous people and their forebears. We white Christians no longer represent the majority of Americans. We are no longer capable of setting the nation's course by sheer cultural and political dominance. But there are still more than enough of us to derail the future of democracy in America.

Jones is the president and founder of PRRI and the author of *The Hidden Roots of White Supremacy* and *The Path to a Shared American Future*, from which this essay is adapted

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