

Committee: DISEC 1

Topic: The question of the status of Taiwan

Chair: Eugenia Gonzalez

School: St George's British School

Summary

Taiwan was a self-governing democratic island in East Asia with its own government, military, and constitution. However, the political status of Taiwan has been a longstanding and complex issue. Taiwan considers itself a sovereign state known as the Republic of China (ROC), with its own government and constitution. Since its establishment, the PRC has claimed Taiwan as a province and has refused to establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The PRC has additionally not ruled out the use of force in the pursuit of unification. The ROC maintained its claim of being the sole legitimate representative of China and its territory until 1991, when it ceased to regard the CCP as a rebellious group and recognized its jurisdiction over Mainland China. The PRC has officially proposed "one country, two systems" as a model for unification, though this has been rejected by the Taiwanese government in Taiwan, major political contention has been between parties favouring eventual Chinese unification and promoting a pan-Chinese identity, contrasted with those aspiring to formal international recognition and promoting a Taiwanese identity, though both sides have moderated their positions to broaden their appeal in the 21st century.

Definition of Key Terms

The Republic of China - the governing body in Taiwan since 1949

People's Republic of China - the governing body of the other parts of China since 1949

Chinese Civil War - lasted between 1927-1950

Mao Zedong - the first leader of PRC

Chiang Kai Shek - the first leader of Taiwan

Xi Jinping = the current leader of China

Tsai Ing-Wen = current president of Taiwan

Background Information

Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations due to objections from the People's Republic of China (PRC) which wants Taiwan to be reunited. Although with a small number of countries, it has diplomatic relations. Cross-strait relations between Taiwan and mainland China have been a focal point of tension specially with some of the leaders. The United States has maintained unofficial relations with Taiwan and has supported Taiwan's self-defence capabilities through arms sales. With its vibrant democracy Taiwan has a multi-party system, and political dynamics can influence its policies toward China. Taiwan is a significant player in the global technology industry, with companies like TSMC (Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company) being major players in the semiconductor industry.

Until 1979, both sides intended to resolve the conflict militarily. Intermittent clashes occurred throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with escalations comprising the First and Second Taiwan Strait crises. In the 1980s as Taiwan relaxed rules on visits to and investment in China. In 1991, it proclaimed that the war with the People's Republic of China was over because of the PRC's desire to be accepted in the international community led it to promote peaceful unification under what would later be termed "one country, two systems", rather than to "liberate Taiwan" and to make Taiwan a Special Administrative Region. This system underpinned Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 and Beijing has sought to increase its influence. Taiwan rejected the offer and Beijing's insisted that Taiwan's ROC government is illegitimate.

Mr Chen was succeeded by the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 who tried improving relations through economic agreements. In 2018 as Beijing stepped up pressure on international companies, if they failed to list Taiwan as a part of China, it threatened to block them from doing business in China. A June 2022 survey found that only 5.2% of Taiwanese supported independence as soon as possible, while 1.3% were in favour of unification with mainland China at the earliest possibility.

The rest supported some form of maintaining the status quo, with the largest group wanting to maintain it indefinitely with no move towards either independence or unification.

The PRC is unlikely to abandon its quest for control over Taiwan, what it calls "reunification with the motherland", no matter who is in power in Beijing. The Qing dynasty's loss of Taiwan to Japan in 1895, and the island's recovery at the end of World War II, are central chapters in the historical narrative of Chinese nationalism. Preventing the permanent separation of Taiwan is thus viewed as essential to the PRC's national interest and, perhaps most importantly, to the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

But to date, Taiwan remains outside of Beijing's control, administered by the same government (although not the same political party) that fled the mainland when the Chinese Communist Party took power in 1949. Taiwan's government has survived for more than seven decades thanks to security assurances from the United States. It is said unification is essential for the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation," a mission to which he has linked his personal legacy and for which he has set a target date of 2049. The PRC continues to state that it prefers to unify with Taiwan through peaceful means but insists that it has the right to do so by force if Taiwan declares independence.

A June 2022 survey of Taiwan public opinion by the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University found that 63.7% of respondents in Taiwan now identify as Taiwanese rather than both Chinese and Taiwanese (30.4%). Taiwan residents fear the imposition of authoritarian political, cultural, and economic controls that would suppress their political and intellectual freedoms. Still, most of Taiwan's people are wary of taking any action that might result in a Chinese attack.

The people of Taiwan know that a declaration of independence or acts tantamount to such a declaration would likely trigger Chinese military action. In the National Chengchi University survey, more than 56.9% favoured maintaining the status quo, under which Taiwan neither declares independence nor moves toward unification with mainland China. Another 30.3% favoured moving toward independence (though only 5% favoured independence as soon as possible), and only 6.4% favoured unification with mainland China.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Republic of China

The Republic of China, or more commonly known as Taiwan, is the exiled former ruler of China, and still claims this title. However, the UN recognises the People's Republic of China as the true China, even though some nations do still recognise the ROC as the true China. They have been under threat numerous times by the PRC and have relied on US guarantees for their security.

People's Republic of China

The People's Republic of China, or more commonly known as just China, is the ruler of the Chinese mainland and has ruled such since their victory in the Chinese Civil War. Ruled by the CCP, they have threatened Taiwan numerous times and have long had ambitions of unifying China on their rule. They have taken steps to expanding their navy with the clear purpose of eventually overpowering the US to control Taiwan.

United States of America

The United States of America doesn't formally recognise Taiwan but has made several protection treaties to ensure that Taiwan doesn't get invaded by the mainland. Their navy has meant that China, for now, has had to settle with what they have in terms of territory. They have several Pacific allies which would also join if a conflict broke out.

Japan

Japan is one of the largest economies in the world and a stern US ally. They have also expressed their support for Taiwan and have a growing navy which would further cause trouble for Chinese hopes for Taiwan.

Timeline of Events

1626 - Spanish adventurers establish bases in northern Taiwan but are ousted by the Dutch in 1642.

1662 - Fleeing the Manchurian conquest of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), Ming loyalists drive out the Dutch from Taiwan and establish authority over the island

1683 - Qing dynasty (1644-1912) forces take control of Taiwan's western and northern coastal areas.

1885 - Taiwan is declared a province of the Qing Empire.

1911~1912 - Chinese revolutionaries overthrow the Qing Empire and establish the ROC.

1943 - Formosa, and the Pescadores, restored to the Republic of China

1945 - After World War II, ROC government representatives accept the surrender of Japanese forces in Taiwan.

1949 - the Battle of Kuningtou on Kinmen

1954 - The ROC-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty is signed in Washington.

1958 - the start of an artillery duel between the ROC

1966 - The first Export Processing Zone is established

1968 – The nine-year compulsory education system is launched

1979 - the Kaohsiung Incident

1987 - Cross-strait people-to-people exchanges begin.

1991 - Taiwan becomes a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation.

1995 - The National Health Insurance program begins.

1996 - The ROC holds its first-ever direct presidential election

2002 - Taiwan becomes a member of the World Trade Organization.

2004 - The first national referendum is held in conjunction with the third direct presidential election

2005 - The Legislative Yuan passes a constitutional amendment package

2009 - Taiwan attends the World Health Assembly as an observer, marking its first participation in an activity of the U.N. since its withdrawal in 1971.

2010 - The centennial of the ROC is celebrated in Taiwan.

2015 - Taiwan signs the WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement and submits its instrument of acceptance to the organization.

2016 - DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen and academic Chen Chien-Jen are elected president and vice president of the ROC.

2017 - Taiwan hosts the Taipei 2017 Summer Universiade.

2019 - A special law legalizing same-sex marriage is passed, making Taiwan the first country in Asia to allow LGBT unions.

2020 - Tsai Ing-Wen and running mate Lai Ching-Te of the ruling DPP party win the 2020 presidential election. The DPP retains its legislative majority.

2022 - The MND establishes the Defense Mobilization Agency for the purpose of utilizing military reserves and assisting with all related activities and affairs. The Ministry of Digital Affairs is established Aug. 27.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1668

In 1961, this resolution was passed which stipulated that the matter of China was one of great concern and that any vote to replace China had to have a 2/3rds majority and would apply when this vote

eventually happened. This was significant as it set the groundworks for the transition of powers between the two Chinas a decade later.

UN resolution 2758

On October 25th 1971, this resolution was passed and stipulated that the People's Republic of China's representatives and government would be recognised as the only China and they would get all the powers the Republic of China previously had. This is significant as it showed as swing on how the world viewed the PRC.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

Sino-American Mutual Defence Treaty

The Sino-American Mutual Defence Treaty (SAMDT), formally Mutual Defence Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China, was a defence pact signed between the United States and the Republic of China (Taiwan) effective from 1955 to 1980. It was intended to defend the island of Taiwan from invasion by the People's Republic of China. Some of its content was carried over to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 after the failure of the *Goldwater v. Carter* lawsuit.

Taiwan Relations Act

This is a US act that stipulates officially substantial but non-diplomatic relations between the US and Taiwan. This is important as it alienated the US from the PRC and since this was signed, the PRC started viewing the US as an insincere partner. This was also important as it emphasised that the US wasn't ready to abandon Taiwan and would prove a pain to the PRC over the next few decades.

Possible Solutions

Unification under the People's Republic of China

Being the larger of the two states, the People's Republic of China has often been the one to push for Chinese unification under their rule. However, the West has often stood against this. If the West were to be persuaded, the PRC may get its wish.

Unification by compromise

The Taiwan-China standoff has caused lots of tension. China and Taiwan both have desires on unifying the Chinese identity. However, being unified by this identity could be used as a factor to force a working compromise between the two, as this could save many lives and prevent lots of bloodshed.

Recognise Taiwan

Though not the most popular choice, many nations have unofficially made talks and agreements with Taiwan, with talks in the works to get Taiwan into the UN. Even if it was to the status of an observer state, Taiwan has proven to be a sustainable nation and it can be argued that they should be recognised as such.

Bibliography

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_status_of_Taiwan

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34729538.amp>

<https://asiasociety.org/center-us-china-relations/avoiding-war-over-taiwan>

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/08/24/the-status-quo-on-taiwan-and-the-importance-of-strategic-ambiguity/>

https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_3.php

<https://asiasociety.org/center-us-china-relations/avoiding-war-over-taiwan>