General Assembly 1

Research Report

The Question of:

Increasing tensions in the strait of Taiwan

Introduction

After world war II China was split into two parties. The communist People's Republic of China (PRC) and the nationalist Republic of China (ROC). The PRC, under the rule of Mao Zedong, managed to expand over the entire main land of China. They pushed the ROC away to the island of Taiwan. The United Stated of America (USA) decided that they had to intervene. They prevented the PRC from invading Taiwan and made a pledge in 1955 to prevent any invasion in Taiwan in the future. For the USA this was a buffer for communist expansion in the region. The pledge enabled the ROC to exist on the island of Taiwan. They know have a democratic elected government, an army and trade with other countries. However, they have never been recognized by the United Nations, since China still sees Taiwan as a province of their one-state China.

The PRC and ROC believe that they are the true successors of the emperor of China, who was removed with the Chinese revolution in 1912. They do not believe the other has rightful authority over China. The ROC sees the PRC as an evil power that has taken China from their rightful owners, while the PRC sees the ROC as a militia that holds power in Taiwan illegally. The fact that both governments claim to be governing China makes the conflict such a complicated one. The UN admitted the PRC in the United Nations General Assembly and expelled the ROC, which had been a founding member of the United Nations and was one of the five members of the permanent members of the Security Council. After more and more nations began to recognize the PRC, including the United States. A lot of nations stopped recognizing the ROC and started recognizing the PRC. Currently only 16 out of the 193 members of the United Nations recognize the ROC.

Since 2008 relations between Taipei and Beijing have grown. Multiple high-level and official meetings between the leaders and governments officials have happened. Although tensions have decreased, tensions are again arising. Dialogue between the nations has been suspended in 2016. In July we saw that American Naval ships that sailed through the strait of Taiwan led to outrage. This occurred in a series of occurrences. In June the government of Taiwan had already made a new weapon deal with the USA. The strait of Taiwan is no longer only a conflict between the ROC and the PRC. It seems that the strait of Taiwan is a battlefield between the USA, Russia, China and other nations involved. It's important that nations work together to prevent further escalation.

The Committee

The General Assembly First committee, also referred to as GA1, is a committee concerning disarmament and international security. The UN general assembly first committee deals with issues and international challenges that threaten peace and can disrupt the global community. The UN committee therefore tends to work closely with the disarmament committee in evaluating all methods to bring peace to pressing issues. The committee was the first to create a resolution of the general assemblies concerning: "Establishment of a Commission to Deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy" passed in 1946 in order to maintain the usage of Atomic Energy, that had recently been discovered and monitor any problems that could be created through it. They continuously work on resolving issues to work towards the greater goal of establishing peace.

The General Assembly committees will join for a plenary session in order to discuss three resolutions, one from each of the General Assembly committees that has passed in their own committee. The plenary session will take place on the third day of the conference and will conclude this session of LEMUN for the general assembly committees.

Key Terms

One-China Policy: A policy that states that there is only one sovereign state under the name of China, despite the fact that there are two governments: The Republic of China and the People's Republic of China.

Two-China Policy: A policy that believes in the existence of two sovereign states under the name of China. The Republic of China in Taiwan and the People's Republic of China in mainland China.

PRC: The People's Republic of China. The communist governments that has control over all mainland Chinese territories.

ROC: The Republic of China. The regime that originates from the Kuomintang nationalists and is currently a democratic state.

The strait of Taiwan: A sea strait that separates the island of Taiwan from the mainland of China.

General Overview

In 1912 the last emperor of China from the Qing dynasty gave up his power in 1912 after militant groups have led violent protests and revolutions all over China. A new republic arose: The Republic of China (ROC). The republic wasn't very stable and was a reason for communist and nationalist groups to form militias, particularly the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China(CPC). The leader of the Kuomintang took power of the republic in 1920. More and more resistance from communist groups arose and these groups fought a bloody war from 1927 until 1937, when Japanese forces invaded China. The war with Japan stopped fighting between these groups and they united against the Japanese until 1945. After the war Japan returned the Chinese territories to the ROC and the civil war resumed. The CPC, under the rule of Mao Zedong, seemed however to gain more and more control over Chinese territories. In 1949 the CPC defeated the KMT on the mainland of China which forced the KMT to retreat to the island of Taiwan. The CPC founded the People's Republic of China (PRC), lead by Mao Zedong. The Republic of China continued to exist on the island of Taiwan.

This led to a strange situation. The Republic of China had been part of multiple meetings with various nations during World War II and was one of the founding members of the United Nations. Further more the ROC was the recognized ruler of China according to the majority of nations. Since the ROC had already established ties to other countries, they received support in first hand. The US gave military support, but stopped doing so in 1949. When the Korean war broke out in 1950, the US changed its policy again and sent warships to the strait of Taiwan to prevent a further escalation of the conflict between the two sides. When in 1954 China attacked islands that were still in control of the ROC (The First Taiwan Strait Crisis), the U.S. Congress passed a bill that made a pledge to protect the island of Taiwan, also called Formosa, from any invasion from the PRC.

Tensions between the two nations stayed at a high peak and in 1958 the another attack from the PRC on territory of the ROC followed. Due to the fact that the ROC now could count on the help of the US, no territory was lost. After this both nations continued to state they would eventually control all Chinese territories and both prepared for a possible attack. Even the ROC would state that they would once attack the PRC and reclaim the mainland of China. More and more nations in the world however began to acknowledge that the PRC was the true China. Many nations stopped recognizing the ROC and in 1971 they lost their position as a member of the United States to the PRC. The PRC also took their position in the Security Council as a permanent member. The United States stopped recognizing the ROC in 1978, however they still held ties with the ROC. Instead of an embassy, there is the American Institute in Taiwan that has in general the same duties as an embassy.

Tension eventually decreased and in 1987 Martial law, called the temporary provisions effective during the period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion, ended after it became clear that retaking the mainland was impossible. This opened a gate for democratic reforms and allowed the parliament to have an opposition and elections for more official positions. In 1995 just before the elections of the President of the ROC, the PRC did a series of missile tests just kilometers away from the island of Taiwan. The USA responded by sending naval ships to the strait of Taiwan. Days before the election another series of missile tests were done by the PRC. The US responded by sending two US navy battle carrier groups to international waters in the strait of Taiwan. The crisis had a counterintuitive effect for the PRC, because relations between Taiwan and the US were as strong as ever and weapon-trade between the US and the ROC grew significantly. The election was won by the sworn-enemy of the PRC: Lee Teng-Hui.

From then on tensions seemed to only decrease. In 2008 dialogue between the ROC and PRC took place on a more advanced level. Agreements were made concerning sea traffic between over the strait and regular flight over the strait arose. Both nations signed the Cross-Strait Service Trade

Agreement which should liberalize trade in services between the nations. This led to protests in Taiwan, but in general opinions towards the strengthening of relations were very positive. This eventually build up to the first meeting between the leaders of the nations in 2015 in Singapore. This was the first meeting in over 60 years. A peaceful two-China solution seemed more likely to happen.

However since 2016 tensions have again grew between the sides. Dialogue was again suspended. The trade-war between China and the US is one of the causes. The current administration of the US-government has strengthened its ties, which began immediate in 2016 when president Trump accepted a call from the President of the ROC. The ROC has unratified the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement. The President of the ROC Tsai Ing-wen has visited the US in recent years multiple times to speak on US-Taiwan and Cross-Strait relations and in 2017 an official bill passed to allow high level visits between government officials. This has led to outrage in the PRC, who say they condemn any official contact between Taiwan and the US.

On a military level tensions also have grown. The PRC moved army training complexes away from the Chinese coast to a more inland private place. They have increased their military build-up with a far bigger budget then before. The ROC and the Americans have responded by increasing the military of the ROC. The Trump administration has sailed through the strait of Taiwan more often than the Obama administration. The current administration has also recommended the ROC to purchase F-16 jets from the Americans and announced a new weapon deal with the Taiwanese government in June this year. The US navy had sent warships not long after this through the Strait of Taiwan in order to ensure freedom of navigation. The Chinese administration responded by accusing the US of "undermining global strategic stability" by violating the 'One China Policy' where the US acknowledged that Taiwan is part of China. In a white paper presented by defense minister Wu on 24 July 2019. Xi Jinping's presidency also said they were ready to go to war if Taiwan tries to gain independence.

Taiwan resides between the PRC and the USA. Their trade-war and power struggle influences the Taiwan-strait conflict. The conflict is extremely sensitive for any actions by the PRC and the USA. What is definitely sure, is that a reunification in the upcoming years is highly unrealistic. If Taiwan will turn out to be a battlefield between the PRC and the USA, it's likely that the population will turn out as the victim.

Major Parties Involved

The People's Republic of China

The PRC is the government of China that rules over mainland China and its over one billion citizens since 1949. It is a communist country. The government still sees Taiwan as a province of China and believe that there is only 'one China' and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of it that will eventually be part of the country. Since 2009 relations with the Republic of China were getting better, but since 2016 there haven't been any meetings between the governments anymore.

The Republic of China

The Republic of China was the government that originated Kuomintang movement in the Chinese civil war. They were defeated by the communist movement and forced to retreat to the island of Taiwan. In 1987 martial law, that was established in order to defend them from the PRC, ended and the nations started to democratize. Only 16 nations recognize the nation, although it has the most characteristics of an independent state. They have not been a member of the United Nations since 1971. Their defense and economy relies heavily on the United States of America. Trade with China has been growing in the last 20 years.

The United States of America

The USA is by far Taiwan's most important ally and friend. They support Taiwan economically with trade and strategically with weapons and other forms of strategic resources. In the past they have also gave the ROC military aid. They only recognize the PRC, but still have diplomatic relations with the ROC in more informal ways and they are bound by law to protect Taiwan from any invasion by the PRC. They believe in free navigation of the Taiwan strait which they have shown in multiple occasions of naval ships sailing through the strait. Currently a trade-war is infesting the PRC and the USA, which could affect the conflict in the strait of Taiwan.

The United Nations

The UN has only recognized the PRC and the ROC is excluded from almost all activities of the United Nations since 1971. The absence of the ROC makes it more complicated for the UN to play a supporting role in the conflict of the strait of Taiwan.

Timeline of Events

Date	Event
1912	Chinese revolutionaries overthrow the Qing Empire and establish the ROC in China
1927-1937	Communist insurgency
1939-1945	World War II
September 2, 1945	The surrender of Japan in China and the begin of the process of returning Chinese territories
1946-1949	Resumption of fighting between ROC and PRC
1949	Retreat of the ROC to the island of Taiwan and the capture of the complete Chinese mainland by the PRC
1954-1955	First Taiwan Strait Crisis
1955	The Formosa Resolution is accepted by the U.S. Congress
1958	Second Taiwan Strait Crisis
1971	PRC is admitted to the UN and the ROC withdraws from the UN
1978	Ending of diplomatic relations between the USA and the ROC
1987	Martial law in Taiwan ends, which results in more democratization
1995-1996	Third Taiwan Strait Crisis
2009	First talks between the ROC and the PRC, which result in direct air- and sea-traffic between the nations
2015	President Ma and President Xi Jinping meet in Singapore, the first meeting between the leaders of the PRC and ROC in 66 years
2016	Suspension of talks between the ROC and the PRC
2018-2019	New tensions in the strait arise
June, 2019	New weapon deal between the USA and the ROC
July, 2019	US-warships sailed through the Taiwan strait

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The history of the Cross Strait relations characterizes itself by a constant movement. We see a lot of progress at the start of this century. There was dialogue between the governments and agreements were made. However, since the Trump administration is in office, a lot of the progress already seems lost. In the past we've seen the two nations threatening each other and preparing themselves for an upcoming attack on the other. In Taiwan it's now clear that the ROC will have no chance in retaking the mainland of China. The PRC however, still states that they will have control over Taiwan in the future.

Since 1993 Taiwanese officials try to get the ROC back as a member of the United Nations. All their requests have been denied by the Secretary-General, due to the One-China Policy that the UN shares.

In the period between 2008 and 2016 we saw the best attempt in trying to solve the issue. The nations talked together on a high-level and made agreements concerning transport and economy. The peak of these high-level talks was found in 2015 when the two leaders met in Singapore. These talks sort of suggested a Two-China Policy, which isn't strange concerning that the majority of the people in Taiwan feel Taiwanese instead of Chinese. However, recent statements by the PRC show that the PRC is definitely not in favor of Two-China Policy.

The Future

With the increasing tensions in the Strait of Taiwan we can only hope it will not further escalate. Both parties seem to prepare themselves for a possible fight in the future. With the trade-war between China and the USA in mind, we can be sure that the conflict will last a while. If America continues to involve Taiwan in their conflict with China, the situation could escalate in violence. It's likely that the ROC and the PRC will not attack each other in the near future. The ROC has already accepted that they will not be able to retake the mainland and the PRC knows that it the ROC has a powerful alley in the USA with whom they probably don't want to mess.

An decisive moment for the future of the Strait of Taiwan is the election of next year. The two parties the KMT and DPP differ in policy towards China and the USA. The KMT will want to keep ties with the PRC, while the DPP is more aimed at friendly relations with the USA. The result of the election will probably form the Cross-Strait relations in the near future. The election in America is probably just as important, since the Trump-administration has a more aggressive strategy than other administrations.

Thus it seems that these tensions will not decrease in the near future, but also not cause any real further escalation. With the right cooperation between parties, tensions could again decrease tensions. Perhaps it's possible for both Chinas to accept a Two-Chinas Policy, where they can live in peach with each other.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (Q.A.R.M.A.)

It is important to know that these possible solutions or points to think about are just for guidance. All delegates may proceed in whichever direction they believe is best for their nation and their alliances. It is also important to think and look further than these solutions in order to create a more beneficial resolution.

Should the UN change its One-China Policy to a Two-China Policy in order to accept the ROC as a member of the United Nations or should they continue their current policy in order to respect the PRC's wishes? Is it in that case an option to work together in other ways with the ROC to find a peaceful solution?

Should the United States of America involve themselves in the conflict between the two Chinas? And is it legitimate to support a country you don't recognize and technically don't have any diplomatic connection with. The USA supporting the ROC, while also have given recognition to the PRC could seem a bit hypocritical.

How can we prevent Taiwan from falling into a conflict between China and the USA. Much harm could be done in the Strait of Taiwan because of its sensitive state. The USA could easily escalate the situation by making decisions to support the ROC and anger the PRC.

How can we decrease the tensions and try to ignite more talks between the nations? We saw that the period between 2008 and 2016 was a peak in communication between the nations. How do we continue these talks and make the communication more fluent?

Further Reading

https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-relations - China-Taiwan relations

https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/geopolitics/article/2156235/strait-talk-are-china-and-taiwan-brink-conflict - Strait talk: Are China and Taiwan on the brink of conflict?

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34729538 - Whats's behind the China-Taiwan divide

https://www.jstor.org/stable/2555319?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents – Resolving Cross-Strait Relations between Taiwan and China

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