General Assembly 1

The situation in the Taiwan Strait

Research Report

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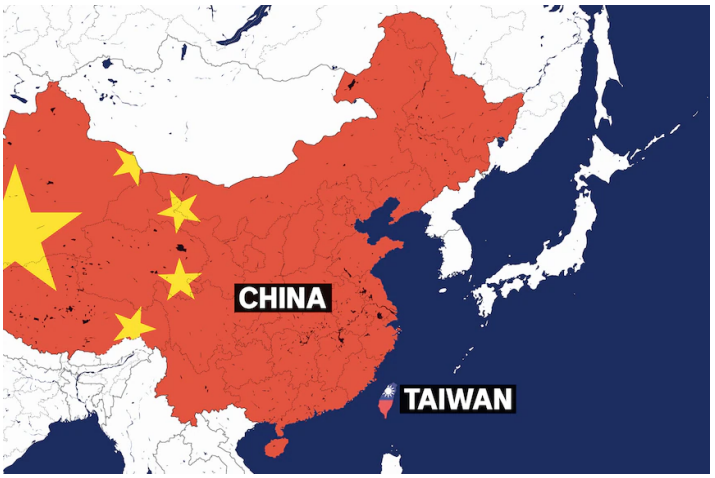
Forum: The First General Assembly

Issue: The situation in the Taiwan Strait

Position: Deputy President and President of the General Assembly

Introduction



Taiwan, officially known as the Republic of China (ROC), is an island country separated from the Chinese mainland, the domain of the People's Republic of China (PRC), by the Taiwan Strait.

The political status of Taiwan is unstable and combative. Since the late 17th century, Taiwan has been ruled by China. The years 1954-1955, known as the First Taiwan Crisis, were critical since they introduced the dispute in the Taiwan Strait. The Chinese government in Beijing doesn't recognize Taiwan's independence. It fervently supports a one-China policy which proclaims the reunification of the territory with the mainland, without ruling out the use of armed force. On the other hand, Taiwan has its own democratically elected government, currency and armed forces. It has currently dropped any claim of jurisdiction over China's mainland, which has been a historical political view.

Recently, there is an escalation in the existing tension between China and Taiwan. The United States' (US) Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit in Taiwan in August 2022, sparked another era of aggression provoking the Fourth Taiwan Crisis. The Chinese government considered that Pelosi's visit was provocative in terms of enhancing Taiwan's international standing. China responded with unprecedented military activities such as live-firing of ballistic missiles over Taiwan's People's Liberation Army (PLA) warships, fighter jets, and drones daily as well as strong punitive diplomatic measures. In April 2023, China heightened the tensions as the country undertook military and diplomatic escalation after Taiwan President, Tsai Ing-wen, visited the US in order to meet with Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy. Furthermore, China's army released a propaganda video showing soldiers organizing a conflict that is considered to be in the Taiwan strait.

In conclusion, the situation in the Taiwan Strait is boiling as instability is growing. Taiwan has become one of the world's most dangerous hot spots in the broader US-China relationship, as well as the most likely flashpoint for a war in East Asia that could trigger the use of nuclear weapons. Thus, a resolution is essential to prevent the crisis since the consequences of this dispute will be catastrophic not only for the major parties involved, but also for the rest of the world.

Definition of Key Terms

Taiwan Strait: Taiwan Strait, also called Formosa Strait is 100 miles (160 km) wide at its narrowest point, lying between the coast of China's Fukien province and the island of Taiwan (Formosa). The strait extends from southwest to northeast between the South and East China seas. It reaches a depth of about 230 feet (70 m) and contains the Pescadores Islands (which are controlled by the government of Taiwan). The chief ports are Amoy in mainland China and Kao-hsiung in Taiwan. The area lies in a typhoon zone.

Invasion: Invasion is an occasion when an army or country uses force to enter and take control of another country

One China Policy: The One China policy is a key cornerstone of Sino-US relations. People's Republic of China will be recognized as the only legal government of China and is also associated with the acknowledgment that the government in Beijing treats Taiwan as an inalienable part of China to be unified one day.

Chinese unification: Also known as Cross-Strait unification or Chinese reunification, is the potential unification of territories currently controlled, or claimed, by the People's Republic of China ("China" or "Mainland China") and the Republic of China ("Taiwan") under one political entity, possibly the formation of a political union between the two republics. Together with full Taiwan independence, unification is one of the main proposals to address questions on the political status of Taiwan, which is a central focus of Cross-Strait relations.

Propaganda: Propaganda is the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of symbols (words, gestures, banners, monuments, music, clothing, insignia, hairstyles, designs on coins and postage stamps, and so forth), often conveyed through mass media.

General Overview

Historical Background

During the mid-17th century Taiwan was a colony of the Netherlands. Since the late 17th century, Taiwan has been ruled by China. In 1895, following the first Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan became a colony of Japan. The end of World War II with Japan's defeat in 1945 was followed by the return of Taiwan to Chinese control. However, in 1949 communist armies' victory over Nationalist forces led to the establishment of PRC. The Nationalist government and armies managed to escape to Taiwan, which was again separated from China.

First Taiwan Strait crisis:

In the wake of the Chinese civil war, the first Taiwan crisis unfolded in 1954-1955 due to the longstanding political and ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. This happened during the early years of the Cold war.
The newly established People's Republic of China (PCR) began shelling the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu, controlled by the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, raising fears of an invasion.

In response, The United States deployed the Seventh fleet to the Taiwan strait to deter aggression and protect Taiwan. After months of tension, a ceasefire was brokered in 1955, temporarily defusing the crisis. However, the dispute over Taiwan's status persisted, setting the stage for ongoing cross-strait tensions and United States' commitment to defend Taiwan.

Second Taiwan Strait crisis:

In the late 1950's, tensions flared once again in the Taiwan Strait as a result of the unresolved issue of Taiwan's status following the Chinese civil war. The PRC intensified its artillery bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu, islands controlled by the ROC. This raised fears of a potential communist invasion of Taiwan, drawing the attention of the United States.
The crisis escalated further as the PRC increased shelling and conducted air raids on Quemoy. Diplomatic efforts involving intermediaries like Poland and India helped defuse the situation. The crisis ended without a full-scale military conflict, but the Taiwan question remained unresolved. The issue of Taiwan's sovereignty endured, fueling ongoing tensions between the PRC and ROC, and maintaining the region's status as a flashpoint in international relations for years to come.

Third Taiwan Strait crisis:

The third crisis, occurring in 1996, was a significant episode of tension between the PRC and the ROC in Taiwan. The primary catalyst for this crisis was Taiwan's presidential elections in March 1996, which indicates a growing desire for increased Taiwanese independence from China. China considered Taiwan a renegade province and feared that the elections would further solidify Taiwan's separate identity. In response, China conducted a series of military exercise and missile tests in waters close to Taiwan, which significantly escalated tensions.

The United States, a longstanding ally of Taiwan, responded by deploying two aircraft carrier battle groups to the vicinity. This move was a clear signal that the U.S. was committed to Taiwan's security and was willing to intervene militarily if China attempted to resolve the Taiwan issue through force.

Fortunately, the crisis did not escalate into military conflict. Taiwan's elections proceeded peacefully, and both sides gradually de-escalated tensions. Nevertheless, the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis underscored the persistent volatility of cross-strait relations and the potential for armed conflict over the Taiwan issue. It also highlighted the United States' complex stance, offering support for Taiwan without officially recognizing it as an independent nation while emphasizing its commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Current situation - Tug of war

In 2019, the Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen declared that the "overwhelming consensus among Taiwan's 23 million people is our rejection of 'one country, two systems''. China believes that Taiwan's political status poses a threat in the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland. Furthermore, in August 2022, the US Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit in Taiwan heightened the tensions between China and Taiwan. Pelosi's visit enhanced the US-Taiwan relations as the Speaker sent a strong message to China: "The visit should be seen as an unequivocal statement that America stands with Taiwan, our democratic partner, as it defends itself and its freedom". China immediately responded with large scale military and diplomatic activities such as live-firing of ballistic missiles over PLA's warships, cyber attacks and embargoing Taiwanese products, provoking the Fourth Taiwan Crisis. In April 2023, president Tsai Ing-wen, visited the US in order to meet with Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy. China also responded by imposing sanctions against anyone who was involved in Tsai's trip and sent warships and planes past Taiwan. Last but not least, China released a propaganda video showing soldiers preparing for a potential war in the Taiwan strait.

Major Parties Involved

Taiwan

Taiwan's official name is Republic of China (ROC)[1]. From a geographical perspective it is an island country that is separated from the Chinese mainland, the domain of the People's Republic of China (PRC), by the Taiwan Strait. It is the biggest island near China and is the gateway for the PRC to access the Pacific Ocean. The capital is Taipei. Taiwan has its own democratically elected government, currency and armed forces. Taiwan holds member status in more than forty organizations, most of them regional, such as the Asian Development Bank and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, as well as in the World Trade Organization but it holds observer status on several other bodies such as the World Health Assembly (WHA).

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The United States' Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit in Taiwan in August 2022, characterized as the Fourth Taiwan Crisis resulted in a military aggression and diplomatic dispute between ROC and PRC. In April 2023, president Tsai Ing-wen, visited the US to meet with Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy.

China

The Chinese government, officially known as the People's Republic of China is the largest of all Asian countries, it is located in East Asia and its capital is Beijing.

Beijing claims that Taiwan is part of China by an understanding known as the 1992 Consensus, which was reached between representatives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT) party that then ruled Taiwan. Nonetheless, the two sides don't agree on the content of this consensus, and it was never intended to address the question of Taiwan's legal status. China, readjusted the policy of Taiwan's liberation by suggesting the "One Country, Two Systems" which declares the reunification of the territory with the mainland on the basis of the One China principle.

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[1] Furian, P. H. *Taiwan Area, political map with capital Taipei. free area of the Republic of China (ROC). provinces and islands groups of Taiwan, located between the East and the South China Sea. illustration. vector stock vector*. Adobe Stock. https://stock.adobe.com/images/taiwan-area-political-map-with-capital-taipei-free-area-of-the-republic-of-china-roc-provinces-and-islands-groups-of-taiwan-located-between-the-east-and-the-south-china-sea-illustration-vector/495076975

PRC's goal by 2049 is to achieve the "China Dream" which consists of a combination of prosperity and power reunification with Taiwan that is both imperative and inevitable.

Pelosi's visit in Taiwan in August 2022 along with the 2023 Taiwan's President visit to US, were especially provocative for China and the country responded with large scale military activities and intense diplomatic measures.

Last but not least, China rejects Taiwan's participation as a member in United Nations (UN) agencies and other international organizations WHAand International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). In 1971, the PRC replaced ROC as the sole representative of China in the UN and as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (SC).

United States of America

The US is a country located in North America and it is a federal republic of 50 states[2]. The United States is a founding member of the UN, International Monetary Fund, North Atlantic Treaty Organization and is a permanent member of the UN SC.

In 1979, the United States established diplomatic relations with China. At the same time, it ended their diplomatic ties and its defense treaty with the ROC. Under President Donald Trump, the US deepened ties with Taiwan over Chinese objections, by selling more than $18 billion worth of arms to the military and unveiling a $250 million complex for its de facto embassy in Taipei. Since 2017, the US has approved more than US$20 billion in weapons sales to Taiwan and joint weapons production with Taiwan is reported to be under consideration. Apart from that, there have been frequent visits of US congressional members to Taiwan since more with 28 members of Congress had traveled to Taiwan from January to early September 2022. Other US measures to support Taiwan are: the Taiwan Travel Act of 2018, the TAIPEI Act of 2019, and the inclusion of the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act in the National Defense Authorization Act making provisions for grants and loans to Taiwan. By doing that, United States attempted to maintain balance between supporting Taiwan and preventing a war with China. Although, in 2022 the US President, Joe Biden, stated that in case of a Chinese attack, the US would help Taiwan's defense[3].

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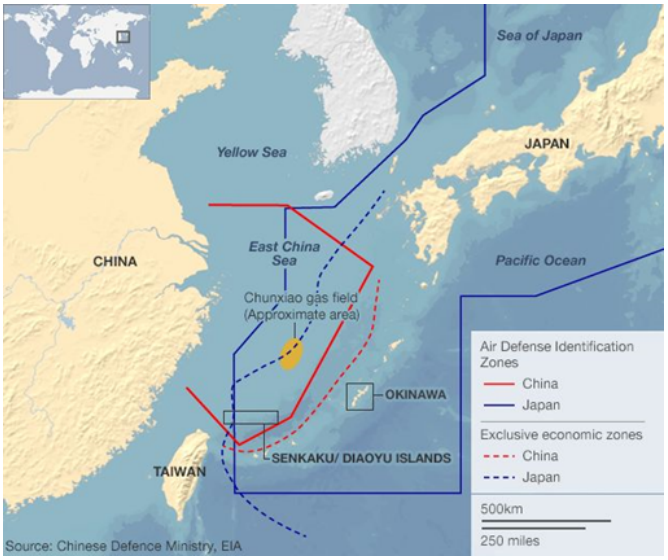
[2] Britannica. *United States*. Encyclopædia Britannica https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States

[3] Ni , V. (2022, September 19). *Joe Biden again says US forces would defend Taiwan from Chinese attack*. The Guardian.

Japan



Japan is an island country located in East Asia. Japan has developed both economic and military relations with the Us as they maintain a security alliance. Japan's Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, met with Pelosi on August 5, 2022, and he condemned China's military exercises near Taiwan that launched the ballistic missiles into the sea, including Japan's exclusive economic zone. Japan holds a firm stance that stems from its opposition to any tensions that would lead to a potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait. It reflects a gradual shift in Japan's threat perception toward China, while, Japanese security experts have expressed strong concerns about the changing strategic balance between China and Taiwan and China's growing diplomatic pressure on Taiwan. Moreover, Japan encourages Taiwan's bid for entry into the WHA. The former Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, described the attacks on Taiwan as attacks on Japan and the US-Japan alliance. Lastly, Japan, in its Diplomatic Bluebook that was published in 2021, claimed Taiwan as "an extremely crucial partner and an important friend, with which it shares fundamental values".

European Union (EU)

The European Union is an international organization that comprises 27 European countries and that share common economic, social, and security policies. The European Parliament strongly condemned the recent Chinese aggressive military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, while it proposed strengthening of the EU relations with Taipei. Except that, in a resolution[4] adopted on Thursday 15 September 2022, the Members of the European Parliament denounced China's recent and unprecedented live-fire military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, followed by Pelosi's visit to Taiwan. Finally, they also demanded the Chinese government to refrain from any measures that could destabilize the Taiwan Strait and regional security.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/19/joe-biden-repeats-claim-that-us-forces-would-defend-taiwan-if-china-attacked

[4] European Parliament resolution of 15 September 2022 on the situation in the Strait of Taiwan (2022/2822(RSP))

Timeline of Events

Mid-17th century	Taiwan was a colony of the Netherland
Late 17th century	Taiwan was ruled by China
1895	Following the first Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan became a colony of Japan
1945	Japan's defeat in 1945 was followed by return of Taiwan to Chinese control
1954 -1955	First Taiwan Crisis
Late 1950s	Second Taiwan Crisis
1996	Third Taiwan Crisis
2019	The Taiwanese President rejected the "One country, Two systems" plan
August 2022	The US Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan
April 2023	The Taiwanese President visited the US to meet with Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy

Possible Solutions

Diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution

Diplomatic dialogue remains a fundamental approach to resolving the Taiwan Strait issue. Direct negotiations between Taiwan, China and other stakeholders should be pursued to find a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution. International mediation or arbitration mechanisms can also be explored to facilitate talks and clarify Taiwan's legal status. In addition, confidence-building measures, such as open communication channels and agreements on military exercises, can help ease tensions and create an environment conducive to negotiations.

Economic and cultural exchange

Encouraging economic and cultural exchanges between Taiwan and China can help build trust and reduce hostility. Expanding trade relations and promoting economic cooperation can create a sense of shared prosperity that can benefit both sides. Furthermore, promoting educational and cultural exchanges can increase mutual understanding, break stereotypes and bridge the gap between the two societies. Initiatives such as joint infrastructure projects or partnerships in different sectors can provide incentives for peaceful interactions and cooperation.

Multilateral diplomacy and international involvement

To address the Taiwan Strait issue, it is essential to engage the international community and pursue multilateral diplomacy. Working through international organizations such as the United Nations and regional fora, such as ASEAN, can help mediate and facilitate dialogue between Taiwan and China. Strengthening defense and security ties between Taiwan and its international allies can serve as a deterrent against possible aggression and bring stability to the region. Advocating for the principles of peaceful conflict resolution and adherence to international law within the Taiwan Strait and the broader East Asian context can contribute to long-term stability and peace.

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