

Forum: Special Political & Decolonisation Committee

Issue: Assessing the tensions between China and Taiwan

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PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear Delegates of the Special Political and Decolonisation Council and other MUN participants,

I am delighted and honoured to have been selected by the amazing MUN head team to chair my first MUN council.

My MUN journey began in 2023, when I, as a new student to Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, decided to sign up for my first ever debating club during sixth form Wednesday enrichment.

With zero experience, I simultaneously decided to sign up for the QEGS MUN with a group of friends! I was very nervous, for obvious reasons, as I had never debated a topic in a formal setting before..... However, I was welcomed with open arms by the previous MUN secretariat and by fellow classmates, resulting in my experience on the day of the conference being one of great comfort and happiness.

I personally feel very passionate about Taiwanese-Chinese relations, as having grown up in Hong Kong, I witnessed many Hong Kong locals around me experience many similar worries to those that citizens of Taiwan may be familiar with.

I am therefore very excited to welcome you to this committee, whether you have no past MUN experience or are someone who is a well rounded debater, and I hope that you enjoy researching and learning about this topic as much as I have!

If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to email me at q4603@queenelizabeths.kent.sch.uk! I would be delighted to hear from you.

Anna Schönleber-Wood - Co-chair of GA3



TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The history of strained relations between China and Taiwan can be traced back to when the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) came to power in 1949. Chinese history is complex, but to simplify it, China had been under the rule of Sun Yat Sen, leader of the Kuo Ming Tang (KMT). (See background information section for more key information!)

Taiwan became a Japanese colony in 1895 after the Qing empire lost the first Sino-Japanese war. In 1945 after Japan lost World War Two, China took control of the island, however, a nationalist government was now in power, led by General Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the KMT. The KMT called Taiwan the Republic of China (ROC), a name that Taiwan has retained.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) claims Taiwan to be a region of China due to its history however many Taiwanese point out that they were not part of the People's Republic of China that was established under Mao Zedong in 1949.

The Taiwanese belief of not being a devolved region of China goes against China's 'One China' principle which is central to their approach to Taiwan

The policy maintains that mainland China and Taiwan are one and therefore sovereignty cannot be divided or denied

Taiwanese governments, especially the DDP, have been very cautious in its relations with China, aiming not to upset or cause any conflict between the two, however in recent years, Taiwan has been seen to lean more towards western powers, with America being the islands strongest ally, America even provides the island with arms.

China has threatened the island with the idea of an invasion in order to 'take back control' of it. This has proven to be very controversial as Taiwan sees itself as distinct from the Chinese mainland as it has its own constitution and democratically elected leaders.

America has vowed to help and defend Taiwan in the case of a Chinese attack and in May 2024, China began to launch a series of military drills around the island in response to an increased amount of political exchange between the US and Taiwan, furthermore, China has called its drills around Taiwan a "strong punishment" for "separatist acts".

The only countries that formally recognise Taiwan are:

- Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Holy See, Marshall Islands, Palau, Paraguay, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Eswatini and Tuvalu.

However, in the context of superpower and influential diplomacy, the ROC's traditional and stable allies include the United States of America, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand



KEY TERMS

The CCP: The Chinese Communist Party, the party that came into power on the 1st of October, 1949, establishing the People's Republic of China. The People's Republic of China is still in power in China right now, under the rule of Xi Jinping.

The KMT: The Kuo Ming Tang was the party that lost the Chinese civil war against the CCP, leading to the party fleeing to the islands of Taiwan. It was dominated by Chiang Kai Shek from 1927 to 1975

Mao Zedong: Also known as Chairman Mao, Mao was one of the creators and the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. He came into power in 1949 and died in 1976 after having ruled China as an authoritarian state. The west commonly refer to him as a dictator, as he brought years of famine, terror and suffering to his people, however, this can be argued, as many would say he made many improvements to the dilapidated China as he found it.

Chiang Kai Shek: The leader of the KMT, the Nationalist party of China that fled to Taiwan after losing the Civil War to the Communist party in China.

The DPP: The Democratic Progressive Party, the current nationalist party ruling in Taiwan. They are a centre to centre-left party. The party first came to power in 2001 when they replaced the Nationalist party that had been there since the ROC. Tsai Ing-Wen was the first female president of Taiwan from 2016-2024. Relations between China and Tsai have been complex with China believing that she leans more towards the West.

Beijing's control: As the capital of China, the term 'coming under Beijings control' refers to China taking control of this thing. In relation to Taiwan it refers to China re-taking control of Taiwan, possibly through force, so that the government of Taiwan will be located in Beijing rather than in Taiwan's capital, Tai Pei.

Reunification: The textbook definition of reunification is "Coming back together again after being separated or in conflict". This would be relevant to Taiwan from a Chinese point of view as Taiwan distanced itself from China after the Chinese Civil War, which was the conflict.

Democracy: Democracy refers to a government by the people. People get to vote for the party or individual they wish to be in power. The people have thereby democratically elected the government, the government ideally reflects the will of the people and is representative.



Communism: Some may describe communism as the opposite of capitalism and therefore the opposite of democracy. Communism is a type of government as well as an economic system where each individual is equal. Communists aim to eliminate socioeconomic class struggles by creating a classless society. Many communist governments end up ruling in an authoritarian or totalitarian manner due to the nature of its beliefs.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sun had believed in democracy for China, with his key three policies being nationalism, democracy and welfare. Following Sun Yat Sen's death in 1925, Chiang kai Shek would be seen to take on the role as leader of China, as his successor. Long story short, Chinese people were not happy with the way China was being run and therefore looked for another to support. This would be Mao's CCP.

The CCP had much of the peasant support, as they spent time and money on building up the trust of people who live in rural areas of China... Most of China was rural, and therefore, the CCP had gained most of China's support through promoting literacy, improving food production and promising change.

The KMT and the CCP ended up going to war, with the CCP coming out victorious. After the KMT lost the Civil War to the CCP in 1949, Chiang Kai-Shek recognised that the party had lost control of mainland China. The party fled to Taiwan and established itself as the government of Taiwan.

For this very reason, in simple terms, China believes that it has control over Taiwan, since the Taiwanese government was formed by a 'Chinese government' all those years ago. China sees Taiwan, which is self-rules, as a 'breakaway province' that will eventually come back under Beijing's control. The key thing to note is that China HAS NOT ruled out the use of force to achieve this reunification.

Taiwan has been labelled the Republic of China (ROC) ever since the KMT fled and set up a government there and that name has stuck.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

CHINA

China believes to have a claim over the self-governed island. It sees Taiwan as a breakaway province that will eventually be under Beijing's control. It has not ruled out the use of force to take control of the island. Beijing has taken increasingly aggressive actions over the past few years which include flying fighter jets near Taiwan.

Some analysts say that a Chinese attack on Taiwan would potentially draw the United States into a war with China.

China has an approach called the 'One China principle' which refers to China viewing the PRC (People's Republic of China) as the only legitimate government of China. In Beijing's eyes, China claims that Taiwan is bound by an understanding known as the 1992 Consensus. Although the 1992 Consensus was reached between representatives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT), both sides are in disagreement



on the content of this 'Consensus', with the Taiwanese saying that the consensus was never intended to address the question of Taiwan's legal existence.

TAIWAN

Taiwan sees itself as distinct from the Chinese mainland and has good relations with the USA. They are under constant threat of invasion from China. Tensions have escalated since 2016 since the election of former president Tsai Ing-wen in 2016. Tsai had refused to accept a formula that her predecessor (Ma Ying-jeou) had agreed to allow increased cross-strait ties. China's claim over Taiwan stems from Taiwan's KMT-drafted constitution which continues to recognise China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Tibet and the South China Sea as part of the ROC.

The KMT does not recognise Taiwan as an independent country and continues to call for closer ties with Beijing.

The DPP (Democratic progressive Party), the KMT's main rival, has however never endorsed the understanding laid out in the 1992 Consensus.

Once former president Tsai was elected, she refused to explicitly accept the consensus. Instead, as many others have also tried to do, she has attempted to find another solution/formula that Beijing would accept. Beijing rejected the proposed formula and as a result they cut off all official contacts with Taiwan.

Current DDP leader and Taiwanese Vice president Lai Ching-te has pledged to maintain contact with China however experts are sceptical that China will willingly want to engage in cross-strait dialogue

THE UNITED KINGDOM

Taiwan has been referred to as a country by several UK MP's however officially, the UK (like most other countries due to pressure from China), does not recognise Taiwan as its own entity, nor does it maintain formal diplomatic relations with the island.

According to the parliamentary website, the UK has no plans to recognise Taiwan as a state however the UK does support Taiwan's participation in international organisations as an observer.

The dispute between Taiwan and China should be resolved "through dialogue, in line with the views of the people on both sides of the Taiwan strait"

Despite the lack UK of recognition of Taiwan as its own entity, the relations between the two have strengthened throughout the past few years, The UK has sent warships on operations in the waters around Taiwan, angering China

The issue that the UK and Taiwan most frequently engage in is trade with the two sides having held annual ministerial trade talks since 1991.

THE USA

One of Taiwan's closest allies. They sell and provide weapons to Taiwan and have pledged to support it if China decides to invade even though Beijing has repeatedly urged Washington to stop selling weapons to and cease contact with Taipei.

The United States first established formal diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1979 and has maintained an unofficial relationship with the island.



The United States pushes for Taiwan's meaningful participation in organisations like the UN due to the fact that China rejects Taiwan's participation as a member in UN agencies and other international organisations.

Furthermore, Ministers from the Group of Seven (An informal bloc of industrialised democracies.. The United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the UK that meets annually to discuss issues) have called for Taiwan's inclusion in WHO (World Health Organisation) forums, this having been triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been numerous acts passed by the US regarding their approach to Taiwan. These include the three US-China communiqués reached in 1972, 1978 and 1982, the Taiwan relations Act (1979) and the 'Six assurances' (1982).

Minor Countries

INDIA

China has enabled ties to be fostered between India and Taiwan, due to strained Sino-Indian relations, however India does not formally recognise Taiwan as its own country

The relations between India and Taiwan have improved since the 1990s, despite both nations not maintaining official diplomatic relations. India's economic and commercial links as well as people-to-people contacts with Taiwan have expanded in recent years

Here are some recent exchanges between the two countries:

- May 2020, two members of the Indian parliament virtually attended the (formally newly elected) President Tsai's swearing in ceremony
- They praised Taiwanese democracy, thereby (some may argue) sending a warning message to China, signalling a strengthening of relations between the (former) Tsai and Modi administrations
- July 2020, the Indian government appointed a top career diplomat, Joint Secretary Gourangalal Das (the former head of the U.S division in India's Ministry of External Affairs) as its new envoy in Taiwan
- August 2023, former Chief of Army Staff (Manoj Mukund Naravane, the former Navy Chief Karambir Singh) and former Air Chief Marshal (R.K.S Bhadauria) visited Taipei

RUSSIA

Russian-Taiwanese relations are virtually nonexistent due to the close relations that Russia has with China. Beijing and Moscow have a relatively close relationship (links through the Ukrainian war). Russia would most likely remain as neutral as possible, were China to invade.

Senior delegations from both sides have exchanged visits and visa requirements for tourists were abolished; however, as mentioned previously, Russia's unprecedented dependence on China prevents Moscow from even thinking about its relations with Taipei..

Taiwan has actually used the Ukraine war to draw attention to the threat posed by mainland China



JAPAN

Historically, Japan has responded passively to interactions between the United States, China and Taiwan. Japan and Taiwan have various common factors, one of them being that they face many common challenges. One of the biggest challenges is how they respond to China's political and military configuration that seeks to change the status quo in the region. China's recent military operations around Taiwan (especially around Kinmen) have much in common with its approach to the Senkaku islands.

It is imperative that both Japan and Taiwan consider how to deal effectively with these operations, some argue that both Japan and Taiwan should have channels and mechanisms for the proper exchange of information and experience gained from each other.

Furthermore, economic security is a big factor when it comes to Japanese-Taiwanese relations. There has been an expansion of new sales channels to Japan, such as increased exports of Taiwanese pineapples to Japan, following restrictions on pineapple imports made by China!

However, Japan has come under pressure from China. One major issue is how (and to what extent) Japan can support Taiwan's accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Additionally, Taipei has pushed Tokyo to raise the level of bureaucrats and ministers who can visit each other, however, the Japanese government has not been able to meet these demands.

CANADA

Canada maintains unofficial but valuable economic, cultural and people-to-people ties with Taiwan

In relation to trade, the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada signed a Science, Technology, and Innovation Arrangement on April 15, 2024. This arrangement will enable opportunities for business-led co-innovation partnerships in high tech sectors under the Canadian International Innovation Program to expand research collaborations across the Canadian and Taiwanese ecosystems.

In 2023, Taiwan was Canada's 15th largest trading partner and sixth largest in Asia. Total merchandise trade with Taiwan in 2023 was \$12 billion, with Canadian merchandise exports of \$2.6 billion, and imports from Taiwan at \$9.5 billion.

THE PHILIPPINES

Taiwan and the Philippines are geographically close to each other and, most importantly, they share common values of freedom, democracy, free media, rule of law, civil society and they also share similar Austronesian culture.

Taiwan hopes to strengthen cooperation with the Philippines in various fields not only in trade and investment, agriculture, fisheries aquaculture, technology, small and medium enterprises, green technology, climate change, but also in education, culture, as well as people to people interactions and exchanges.



In 2023, Taiwan and the Philippines two-way trade amounted to \$7.41 billion. Additionally, in order to strengthen the business ties with the Philippines, Taiwan has already established nine banks in the Philippines.

TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS (1949-PRESENT)

Event	Date
The KMT flee from China and relocate to Taiwan	1949
The Chinese Communist Party wins the Civil War	1949
Taiwan becomes an ally of the United States	1950
Beijing takes over China's UN seat, previously held by Taipei	1971
The US establishes relations with China	1979
Taiwan residents are allowed to visit China for the first time since the war	1987
The first talks between the two sides are held in Singapore	1993
China tests missiles off of Taiwan's coast to deter voters in Taiwan's first democratic presidential election	1996
KMT loses power in Taiwan for the first time	2000
KMT are re-elected into power on a Beijing friendly platform, resuming talks between China and Taiwan	2008
Both leaders of China and Taiwan meet in Singapore, shaking hands and waving enthusiastically to press	2015
The DPP come into power with the first female president	2016
China then suspends all communications with Taiwan after the new government failed to acknowledge the concept of there being only 'one China'	June 2016
Trump's administration in the US approved \$1.4 billion worth of arms sales to Taiwan (angers Beijing)	2017
The US adopts a law reinforcing ties with Taiwan	2018
China circles Taiwan with 23 Warplanes and 7 Warships	2024

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

There have not been any solutions found to this issue, especially since it is most definitely an active and ongoing issue. As seen above, previous US president Donald Trump's administration approved the sale of arms to Taiwan, possibly aggravating the situation more.

The closest anyone has come to a solution has been avoiding recognising Taiwan as an independent and self-governed country. Many countries including the UK have done this, most likely to avoid escalating tensions between the two countries. However, an additional perspective could be taken, and the avoidance of recognition could be due to countries not wanting strained diplomatic relations with China themselves.

(It would be worth looking into China's position on the world stage at this point)

As China continues to rapidly develop as a major world power, governments and administrations are less likely to want to make moves that garner them a negative Chinese perspective!

Keeping trading partners open is key and making sure that you are friends with the world's possible strongest power is essential.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

As this is an ongoing issue, with developments likely to happen by the time the MUN conference comes around, possible solutions will continue to develop with the time.

In this study guide I have chosen to outline some possible solutions that countries should have an open and cooperative debate about.

Keeping diplomatic relations friendly

- Avoiding the invasion of Taiwan by China
- Keeping China as a strategic/close ally (depending on the country)
- Establishing and encouraging international cooperation on the issue
- Promoting friendly relations with other countries
- Improving communication between Taiwan and China
- China should reduce its military, economic and political coercion of Taiwan
- The US should clarify and uphold its "one China" policy
- Taiwan's next president should seek to resume dialogue with the mainland and strengthen the island's defence

Taipei, Beijing and Washington can still choose to manage this risk by providing each other with reinforced reasons to believe that waiting for a peaceful solution remains the best path forward.

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