



# Resolving rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait

General Assembly 1 (GA1)  
Disarmament and international security



From a separated world to global peace: the need  
for a new look on institutions.



**Forum:** General Assembly 1 (GA1) - disarmament and international security

**Issue:** Resolving rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait

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## Introduction

After the second World War China was split into two parties. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the nationalist Kuomintang (GMT). The Kuomintang had won the first and only national democratic elections China ever had and ruled China (the Republic of China (ROC)). The two parties had worked together in the war, but both wanted control over China. After the capitulation of Japan the Chinese Civil War started in 1946.

When the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949 and the CCP established the People's Republic of China (PRC), the old Nationalist government fled to the island of Taiwan. The United States of America (US) decided that they had to protect the Kuomintang. They prevented the PRC from invading Taiwan and in 1955 made a pledge to prevent any invasion in Taiwan in the future. The US did this, because they did not want the PRC to spread communism further. They now have a democratic elected government, an army and trade with other countries.

Up until 1971 China was represented in the United Nations by Taiwan, but on July 15th 1971 the General Assembly replaced the representation with the People's Republic of China. Today only 13 members of the UN recognise Taiwan as a country.

Both the PRC and the ROC believe that they are the true successors of the last emperor of China. They both do not believe that the other party has rightful authority over China.



## Definition of Key Terms

### One-China Policy

A policy that believes there is only one sovereign state under the name of China, this policy only recognizes one of the parties as the rightful government of China.

### Two-China Policy

A policy that believes in the existence of two sovereign states called China. The power over mainland China is under the People's Republic of China and the power over Taiwan is under the Republic of China

### PRC

The People's Republic of China. The communist government 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

### Chinese Civil Wars

After militant groups have led violent protests and revolutions all over China, the last emperor of China gave up his power in 1912. A new republic was established in 1913: The Republic of China (ROC). The first democratic elections were won by the nationalist party, the Kuomintang (KMT). Because the new government did not make the changes needed and were very corrupt the republic wasn't very stable. More and more resistance arose from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the parties fought a very bloody war from 1927 until 1937, when Japanese forces invaded China. The two parties were forced to unite against the Japanese until the Japanese surrendered in 1945. After the war Chinese territories were handed back to the ROC and the Civil War resumed. In the war the CCP gained more and more control over Chinese territories. In 1949 the CCP defeated the KMT on the mainland of China, which forced the KMT to retreat to the island of Taiwan. On October 1st Mao Zedong, the leader of the CCP, founded the People's Republic of China (PRC). The ROC continued to exist on the island of Taiwan.

### The First Taiwan Strait Crisis

The Civil War led to a strange situation. The ROC was one of the founding members of the United Nations and according to the majority of nations was the recognized ruler of China. At first the ROC received a lot of support, because they had already established ties to other countries. The US gave military support, but stopped doing so in 1949.

The US changed its policy and sent warships to the strait of Taiwan when the Korean war broke out in 1950 to prevent a further escalation between the two sides. In 1954 when China attacked islands that were still in control of the ROC the First Taiwan Strait Crisis started. The US Congress passed a bill that made a pledge to protect the island of Taiwan, also called Formosa, from any invasion from the PRC.

### The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis

After the first crisis tensions stayed at a high peak and in 1958 the PRC attacked the ROC again. Because the ROC now had the help of the US no territory was lost. After the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis both countries continued to state that they would eventually control all Chinese territory and both were prepared for a possible attack.

More and more nations in the world began to acknowledge that the PRC was the true China. Many nations also stopped recognizing the ROC and in 1971 the ROC lost their position as a member of the United Nations to the PRC. The PRC also took their position as a permanent member in the Security Council. In 1978 the US stopped recognizing the ROC, but still held ties with them. Instead of an embassy, there is the American Institute in Taiwan that in general has the same duties as an embassy.



## The Third Taiwan Strait Crisis

Eventually tension decreased and in 1987 Martial law, called the temporary provisions effective during the period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion, ended when it became clear that retaking the mainland was impossible. This allowed the ROC to have more democratic reforms and allowed the parliament to have an opposition and elections for more of the official positions.

Just before the first presidential elections, the PRC did a series of missile tests just kilometres away from Taiwan. The US responded by sending naval ships to the strait. More missile tests were done by the PRC just days before the election. The US responded again by sending two US navy battle carrier groups to international waters in the strait of Taiwan. The crisis had a negative effect for the PRC, because the relations between Taiwan and the US became stronger than ever and the weapon-trade between the two nations grew significantly. The sworn-enemy of the PRC won the election: Lee Teng-Hui.

## Decreasing tensions

At this point the tensions seemed only to decrease. Dialogue between the ROC and the PRC took place on a more advanced level in 2008. Agreements were made about the strait. Both nations signed the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement which should liberalise trade in services between the nations. This led to protests in Taiwan, but in general opinions towards strengthening the relationship were positive. Eventually the first meeting between the two nations in over 60 years took place in 2015 in Singapore. A peaceful two-China solution seemed most likely to happen.

## Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis?

Since 2016 however tensions have again grown between the sides. Dialogue was suspended again. One of the causes was the trade-war between China and the US. The US strengthened its ties with the ROC and the ROC unratified the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement. In recent years the President of the ROC has visited the US to speak on US-Taiwan and Cross-Strait relations. An official bill passed in 2017 to allow high level visits between government officials. The PRC reacted by saying they condemn any official contact between the two nations.

On July 19 2022 tensions rose again when it became known that the speaker of the United States House of Representatives would also visit Taiwan while on an official trip to Asea. While staying in Taiwan she met president Tsai Ing-wen. The PRC saw this as a provocation, because it's against the One-China Policy the US officially handles. As a reaction the PRC held big military exercises on the waters surrounding the island that ended on August 10. On August 28 the US sent two warships through the strait.

Taiwan resides between the PRC and the US. The conflict is extremely sensitive for any actions by the PRC and the US. A reunification of both China's in the upcoming years is highly unrealistic.



## Major Parties Involved

### The People's Republic of China

The PRC has had power over mainland China since the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949. Officially the PRC is still a communist country, but since the first big leader of the PRC Mao Zedong died in 1976 the PRC's economy became more open and capitalistic.

The government of the PRC sees Taiwan as a province of China and handles an One-China Policy. They believe that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China that will eventually come back as a real part of the country. The relationship with the Republic of China has been getting better since 2009, but since 2016 there haven't been any meetings.

### The Republic of China

The Republic of China used to rule over mainland China before the Civil War. The government originated from the Kuomintang movement. In the Civil War the ROC was defeated by the communist party and were forced to retreat to the island of Taiwan.

In 1987 the ROC started to democratise. Only 13 UN member states recognize the Republic of China, even though the nation has most of the characteristics of an independent state. No government has ever had formal diplomatic ties with both the ROC and the PRC simultaneously. Most countries have unofficial relationships with the ROC. Although the ROC was one of the founding nations of the UN in 1945, they were replaced by the PRC in 1971.

The Republic of China relies heavily on the United States of America for their defence and economy, but trade with China has been growing in the past years.

### The United States of America

Taiwan's most important ally is by far the US. They support Taiwan with trade, weapons and other strategic resources. In the cold war they have also given the ROC military aid. Although they only recognise the PRC, they still have informal diplomatic relations with the ROC and are bound to protect Taiwan from any invasion from the PRC by law. The US believes in free navigation of the Taiwan strait. On multiple occasions they have shown this with naval ships sailing through the strait. Since 2018 a trade-war between the PRC and the US has been happening.

### The United Nations

Currently the UN only recognises the PRC. Since 1971 the ROC has been excluded from almost all activities of the United Nations. 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

1912	Establishment of ROC in China
1927-1937	First war between KMT and CCP
1939-1945	World War II
1946-1949	Chinese Civil War
October 1, 1949	Establishment of PRC in China
December 7, 1949	Nationalist Government evacuates to Taiwan
1954-1955	First Taiwan Strait Crisis
1955	The Formosa Resolution accepted by US Congress
1958	Second Taiwan Strait Crisis
1971	In the UN the ROC was replaced by the PRC
1978	End of diplomatic relations between the US and the ROC
1987	Martial law in Taiwan ends
1995-1996	Third Taiwan Strait Crisis
2009	First talks between the ROC and PRC
2015	President Ma and President Xi Jinping meet in Singapore
2016	Tensions start rising again
August 2022	Speaker of the US House visits Taiwan
August 10, 2022	PRC military around Taiwan exercises finish
August 18, 2022	Two US warships sail through the strait



## Previous attempts to solve the issue

The tensions surrounding the Taiwan Strait are always changing. At the beginning of this century a lot of progress was made. There was dialogue between the two governments and they made agreements. For people in Taiwan it is now clear that the ROC will have no chance in retaking the mainland of China in the near future. On the other hand, the PRC still states that they will have control over Taiwan.

Since 1993 Taiwan's officials have been trying to get the ROC back as a member of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has denied all requests, because of the One-China Policy the UN shares.

The best attempt to solve this issue was in the period between 2008 and 2016. There were talks between the nations on a high-level and agreements concerning transport and economy were made. The peak of these conversations was in 2015 when the two leaders met in Singapore. The talks sort of suggested a Two-China Policy, which isn't strange considering that the majority of the people in Taiwan feel more Taiwanese than Chinese.



## Possible solutions

Here are some of the solutions you could use in your resolution:

The UN could change its One-China Policy into a Two-China Policy in order to accept the ROC as a member of the United Nations or they could continue their current policy in order to respect the PRC's wishes.

Maybe your country thinks countries like the US shouldn't support the ROC, meanwhile not recognising the country and handling a One-China Policy. Maybe the US shouldn't support the ROC in order to prevent them from angering the PRC and escalating the conflict. It could also help if the US made the full extent of its defensive ties with Taiwan clear and if the US closed the office of its military representative at the American Institute in Taiwan.

On the other hand your country can believe that there should be more conversations between the countries, like in 2008 to 2016.



## Useful documents

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-relations-tension-us-policy-biden> - China-Taiwan relations

<https://www.dw.com/en/taiwan-strait-what-to-expect-in-2023/a-64227789> - More about what could happen in 2023

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34729538> - What's behind China-Taiwan tensions?



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