

## China and Taiwan conflict: A historical and current approach

Have you ever heard about “the Rebel Island?” That is how China defines Taiwan. “Rebel Island” is a pejorative term used by China to make clear Taiwan is the conflictive part in the issue between them that has been going on for decades. For China, Taiwan is not a country claiming for independence, Taiwan is like a child who refuses to obey its parents, and as China has stated in several occasions, they “don’t promise to not use force against them”, as a parent who threatens its child with a punishment.

China has always thought that Taiwan will eventually join them as a unique country, despite Taiwan’s aspirations for independence are deeply rooted in their history and national discourse. But, when and why did this issue start? How have they come to such bad terms? Is there any pacific solution viable for them?

### History:

Let us start by a little zoom in Taiwan’s history. The first people settled in Taiwan were tribes from Oceania and the south of China, mostly. Since the XVI century, a lot of Chinese migrants moved to Taiwan territory because of poverty and political disturbances. Then, until the end of the XIX century, Taiwan was under the Qing dynasty administration, but it ended in 1895 after the first Chinese-Japanese war, when Qing dynasty was forced to give up on Taiwan.

In 1927, with Taiwan still under the Japanese occupation, the Chinese Civil War began between the Mao Tse Tung communists and the official government of Chiang Kai-shek. As we all know, Mao won the war, and Kai-shek and his supporters had to flee to Taiwan in 1949, where they settled the “Republic of China”, in contrast with Mao’s “Popular Republic of China”.

What not everybody knows, is that after the Chinese civil war, most of the occidental countries and the United Nations recognized Taiwan as the legitimate Chinese government, refusing to accept the newborn communist China. Taiwan even was given a sit in the UN Security Council. However, since then, the number of countries that recognize Taiwan as an official state has decreased from 71 at the end of the civil war, until only 15 at the moment. On top of that, Taiwan was expelled from the United Nations in 1971. Why? Because once China developed its production and economy, they made a smart move, announcing that any country that wants to establish diplomatic relations with them must cut any diplomatic relation with Taiwan. There is no in-between position. China stated a clear: “You are with us or against us”.

### Now:

This blunt measure by the China has gradually turned Taiwan into an isolated and rejected state internationally. However, many countries have kept maintaining unofficial relationships with Taiwan, such as the United States. Despite having to withhold diplomatic relationships with Taiwan to establish them with China, the US have maintained a neutral position on the issue because they possess some interests in the Popular Republic of China, but at the same time they’ve always sustained good terms with Taiwan and the US is willing to defend it.

Actually, since the last century, the positions have barely changed. On the one hand, China insists on the legacy and common origins they share with Taiwan. They come from the same family and thus, they belong together. On the other hand, Taiwan argues that they are a sovereign country with its constitution and democratic elections. However, there are political parties with divergent opinions about it in the island. The DPP, currently in the government, favours independence for Taiwan, but the KMT, the original party in exile, favours reunification.

And, what do Taiwanese people think about this? According to a survey by the University of Chengchi, five years ago, more of the 60% of the population identifies as Taiwanese, while only a 3,5% consider themselves Chinese, and most of them support a moderate position regarding independence. They don't want to unite with China but they also are afraid of the possible consequences of claiming unilateral independence.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, there is a high probability that sooner or later, this conflict will cross beyond their borders and will become an international issue, if it hasn't been yet. I would say it seems very complicated to reach an agreement that satisfies both parts, even in a long-term, but we can still hope for the rise of new political leaders who know how to handle the situation peacefully, and not with international threats and blockades so, at least, the Chinese people, whether continental or islander, can live in peace.

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