

One Country – Two Systems

Cross-Strait Relations

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The main reason for this paper is to find out more about the cross-strait relationship between China and Taiwan. Why is this diplomatic patchwork still alive that has kept the island separate from Communist mainland since 1949? What would have happened without the United States in a mediating position, or was their influence even harmful to the obvious long-term ambiguous cross-strait relations?

China did not consider Taiwan as an independent state as it was rather seen as a renegade province. After losing the civil war to Communist Chinese and fleeing to Taiwan, the nationalist Kuomintang

(KMT) leaders of the Republic of China regarded the Communist Chinese government as illegitimate, in turn claiming the mainland as rightfully their own (Roberge/Lee, 2009).

The Chinese Civil War turning decisively in the favor of mainland CPC, the ROC government retreated to Taipei, while the CPC proclaimed the PRC government in Beijing. Since then, the relations were basically restricted to limited contact, a lack of commercial cooperation, political tensions and general instability.

Beijing and Taipei were proclaiming two competing versions of the same Chinese national identity. Both agreed upon China mainland and Taiwan being part of the same political entity, whereas

the legitimate government for whole China remained unclear. The United States had to declare two systems for this one country and acclaimed its ally Taiwan to rule over China under Truman administration in 1951. That is how China became part of this cross-strait conflict, as Washington was unwilling to recognize the Communist government in Beijing (Kissinger, 2009: 166).

Furthermore, have the US been constantly supporting Taiwan through arms deliveries in order to defend themselves from China mainland, which had deployed ballistic missiles along the Taiwan strait as well as strategically important islands (Kissinger, 2009: 167).

The US as the designated partner of Taiwan in this conflict did not have any

strategic interest in these islands, nor did they intervene in the suggestions of China addressed to Chiang Kai Shek to officially return the islands to China mainland. Nevertheless even the UDSSR got involved in the conflict and almost considered the use of nuclear weapons. This was just part of the nationalist war strategy of Mao Zedong and almost ended in another war of the super powers of the US and the UDSSR (Kissinger, 2009: 173).

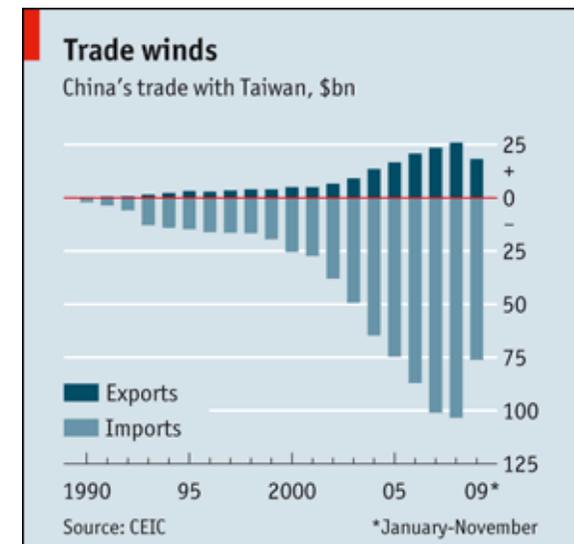
In this post-WWII period the political ambitions of Mao Zedong and Beijing's nationalist view of united China did not contribute much to resolve the cross-strait conflict, neither did it soothe the already tensioned bilateral understanding of China and the US.

Deng Xiaoping had a quite diplomatic approach towards Taiwan, which supported the thawing of this special relationship and the government of Taiwan on the other hand first allowed visits to China mainland in 1978. The PRC National People Congress also passed the The Three Links (postal, transportation and trade) between China mainland and Taiwan as a further try of unification. However, those have been officially restored only in the end of 2008. Prior to that flights were routed through intermediate destinations, such as HK or Macau.

A major mediation approach has been established as a communiqué within that period. Referred to as the 1992 Consensus, it states that there is only one China, but China and Taiwan can interpret that

principle however they wish (Roberge/Lee, 2009).

China's entry into the WTO in 2001 as a further example showed the pressure on both states, Taiwan and China, when new economic, political or diplomatic tasks occur. Taiwan entered the WTO within one month after China.



(Source: <http://www.economist.com/>)

Despite those diplomatic frictions the cross-strait economic relationship is fairly well developed, making China the largest trading partner of Taiwan. Also the daily direct flights between mainland and Taiwan are on a constant rise (Economist, 2011).

Recent discussions about the defending arms providing commitment of the US towards Taiwan are not contributing to soothe bi- or even trilateral frictions. ‘Taiwanese are accustomed to having more than 1,500 Chinese missiles aimed at the island, but so too are they used to the comforting balm of U.S. support.’ (The Wallstreet Journal, 2011)

Due to the ambiguity of cross-strait relations with China as an economic super power on the one hand as well as former colonialized, new free and democratic Taiwan on the other hand a mutual solution is still to be agreed upon. Referring to the 1992 Consensus both countries interpret their own culture and political development as the predominant for whole China, which might not be the best approach for their further diplomatic forthcoming.

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