

# Houston Area Model United Nations Standard Committee

# SPECPOL



Chair | Caroline Hsu  
Topic A: The Status of Taiwan  
Houston Area Model United Nations 49  
February 1 & 2, 2024

# Note to Delegates

## Delegates,

My name is Caroline Hsu and I'm a freshman at UT Austin! I'm majoring in Computer Science and Plan II and I'm so happy to be a part of HAMUN this year! I just graduated from The Village School and am a native Houstonian.

I've had much MUN experience, especially in high school. I've been a delegate at HAMUN quite a few times (4 times!) and have participated in other local conferences, such as CTMUN and even national and international conferences such as NHSMUN and ISRMUN. Over my career, I've amassed 7 BDs and 3 ODs and HMs! I'm so happy to be sharing my MUN experience with y'all. I love MUN because I get to engage in meaningful discussions about global issues, develop my public speaking and negotiation skills, and meet incredible people from all over the world who share my passion for making a positive impact.

Chairing the SPECPOL committee is an exciting opportunity for me because it allows me to engage with complex global issues and foster in-depth discussions among delegates. As a Computer Science and Plan II major, I bring problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that can guide delegates through these intricacies. My passion for international relations and the desire to facilitate productive discussions on these critical issues drive my interest in chairing SPECPOL.

To all delegates: my tip for you is to engage actively, collaborate passionately, and never hesitate to voice your unique perspectives and ideas. Remember that the power of MUN lies in the diversity of thought and the strength of diplomacy. Best of luck in your committee sessions, and may your experience at HAMUN be both enlightening and rewarding. Here's to a fantastic conference!

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# The Status of Taiwan

## Introduction

The status of Taiwan stands as a focal point in contemporary geopolitics, characterized by a complex historical backdrop and an evolving current context. Taiwan's history is rich and diverse, marked by the presence of indigenous populations, European colonialism in the 17th century, Qing Dynasty rule, and a period of Japanese administration from 1895 to 1945. Following World War II, Taiwan came under the control of the Republic of China (ROC). However, the Chinese Civil War led to the ROC's retreat to Taiwan in 1949, while the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established on the mainland. In the years since, Taiwan has transformed into a vibrant democratic society with a robust economy. Nonetheless, the issue of Taiwan's political status remains contentious, shaped by the

“One-China Policy” and ongoing disputes between the PRC, Taiwan, and other global actors. This topic overview will explore the historical foundation of Taiwan's status and delve into the current international context, examining the intricate web of relationships, legal frameworks, and geopolitical dynamics that surround the island of Taiwan. Delegates in the Model United Nations must navigate these intricacies while considering the implications of their decisions on regional and global stability.



Source: [The Economist](#)

## Historical Background

Taiwan's historical narrative begins with its pre-colonial era when indigenous populations inhabited the island. These diverse indigenous groups contributed to the island's rich cultural heritage, each with their distinct languages, customs, and traditions.

In the 17th century, Taiwan experienced European colonialism as Dutch and Spanish colonial powers arrived, introducing new influences to the island. Their presence was marked by trade, territorial disputes, and engagement with the indigenous peoples.

Then, Taiwan's history took a significant turn when the Qing Dynasty of China incorporated Taiwan into its territorial holdings in the late 17th century. Under Qing rule, the island saw developments in agriculture, trade, and immigration, leading to a more prominent Chinese presence.

Following the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan. The subsequent half-century of Japanese rule brought modernization, infrastructure development, and changes in governance, significantly shaping Taiwan's society and economy.

After World War II, Taiwan's status underwent another transformation when the ROC took control of the island. As the Chinese Civil War intensified, the ROC government led by Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan in 1949, while the PRC was established on the mainland. This separation set the stage for the ongoing dispute over Taiwan's political status.

Over the ensuing decades, Taiwan underwent a remarkable transformation. The island transitioned from a martial law regime to a vibrant, multi-party democracy, marked by free and fair elections, a robust civil society, and respect for human rights. Economically, Taiwan evolved from an agrarian society into a global economic powerhouse, becoming a leader in high-tech industries, manufacturing, and trade.



Source: [VOA News](#)

## Current Background

In the period spanning from 1987 to 2016, Taiwan and China witnessed significant developments. Reconciliation efforts were marked by Taiwan allowing its residents to visit China in 1987, leading to increased family reunions and boosted trade. Notable steps towards normalization included lifting emergency rule in 1991, signifying the end of a state of war with China, and the initiation of direct talks in 1993. However, tensions flared in 1995 when Beijing suspended talks over a visit by the Taiwanese President to the United States, and in 1996, China's missile tests heightened tensions during Taiwan's first democratic presidential election. The year 2000 saw a political shift in Taiwan as the Kuomintang (KMT) lost power, fostering improved trade links between the two sides. Despite these ups and downs, important events like the 2005 law making secession illegal and high-level talks in 2008 and beyond played significant roles.

In 2016, Taiwan's relationship with China took a different turn as Tsai Ing-wen, representing the traditionally pro-independence

Democratic Progressive Party, was elected as Taiwan's first female president. Despite emphasizing democracy and stability with China in her victory speech, China cautioned against any moves towards formal independence. The year saw further strains, with China suspending communications, and US President-elect Donald Trump's direct contact with Taiwan, challenging diplomatic norms. Subsequent US arms sales and legislation strengthening ties with Taiwan in 2017 and 2018 further escalated tensions. In 2018, the US State Department's approval of military aircraft spare parts sales to Taiwan further strained relations with China. These developments highlight the intricate political and diplomatic dynamics between the US, China, and Taiwan, shaping the contemporary regional landscape.

## Role of Non-UN Organizations

World Trade Organization (WTO): Taiwan is a member of the WTO under the name "Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu (Chinese Taipei)." While it is not a UN member, its participation in the WTO allows it to engage in international trade and dispute resolution.

## World Health Organization (WHO):

Taiwan has sought observer status in the WHO due to its significant contributions to global health and the need for timely information sharing. However, its participation is hindered by political factors.

## International Civil Aviation

Organization (ICAO): Taiwan's exclusion from ICAO affects its aviation safety and participation in global aviation standards, potentially posing risks to regional air travel.

Interpol: Taiwan is not a member due to political factors, which affects its ability to collaborate on international law enforcement and combat transnational crime.

## Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

(APEC): Taiwan participates in APEC meetings and activities but not as a full member. Its involvement is primarily in the economic and trade domain.

## Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP): Taiwan has expressed interest in joining the CPTPP, a trade agreement among several countries in the Asia-Pacific region, to expand its economic ties.

## **Past UN Action**

1950 - UN Recognition of the PRC: In 1950, the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 2758, recognizing the PRC as "the only legitimate government representing China to the United Nations." This resolution marked a significant diplomatic shift, as the ROC lost its seat at the UN and its recognition as the legitimate government of China.

Limited UN Involvement: Since Resolution 2758, the UN has not recognized Taiwan as a separate and sovereign state. Taiwan has made several unsuccessful attempts to gain membership in the UN. Its efforts have faced opposition from the PRC, which insists that Taiwan is an integral part of its territory.



**INTERPOL**



## Participation in Specialized Agencies:

Despite its exclusion from UN membership, Taiwan has sought participation in UN specialized agencies and programs where statehood is not a requirement. Taiwan has, on occasion, gained observer status or participated under different names, such as "Chinese Taipei."

Cross-Strait Relations: The UN's role in the status of Taiwan is closely tied to the political dynamics between Taiwan and the PRC. Cross-strait relations have seen periods of tension and reconciliation, influencing Taiwan's international standing.

Global Support for Taiwan: While Taiwan does not have UN membership, it has received support from some UN member states in various forms. These states have encouraged Taiwan's participation in international forums and have supported its efforts to contribute to global issues.

Taiwan is not a current part of the UN, but it would have catastrophic effects if it would join the UN.

## **Taiwan Relations with Major Powers**

China: China has employed a variety of coercive tactics short of armed conflict, and it has ramped up these measures since Tsai's election in 2016. To that end, China has increased the frequency and scale of patrols of PLA bombers, fighter jets, and surveillance aircraft over and around Taiwan. These attacks have soared in recent years. In 2020, Taipei accused four Chinese groups of hacking into at least ten Taiwanese government agencies and six thousand official email accounts since 2018 to try to access government data and personal information. Beijing has also used nonmilitary measures to pressure Taiwan. China has also pressured global corporations, including airlines and hotel chains, to list Taiwan as a Chinese province.

United States: In 1979, the United States established formal diplomatic relations with the PRC. At the same time, it severed its diplomatic ties and abrogated its mutual defense treaty with the ROC. Beijing has repeatedly urged Washington to stop selling weapons to and cease contact with Taipei. The U.S. approach is governed by its One-China policy. But President Joe Biden has seemingly rejected the policy, stating several times that the United States would come to Taiwan's defense if China attacked.

## Status Quo

Most people in Taiwan support maintaining the status quo. A small number support immediate independence, according to opinion polls conducted by National Chengchi University. An increasing number of Taiwanese people feel more closely tied to Taiwan than to the mainland. By comparison, 33 percent identified as both Taiwanese and Chinese, down from 40 percent a decade earlier. Among those who identify as Chinese is former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou, who said “we are all Chinese” during a March 2023 visit to China, the first by a president of Taiwan since the KMT assumed governance of the island in 1949.

## Taiwan’s Economy

Taiwan’s economy remains reliant on trade with China, which is the island’s largest trading partner. However, their economic relationship has experienced disruptions in recent years, partly due to Beijing’s pressure on the island and Taiwanese officials’ growing concern about its overreliance on trade with China. Under President Ma, who was in office from 2008 to 2016, Taiwan

signed more than twenty pacts with the PRC, including the 2010 Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement [PDF], in which they agreed to lift barriers to trade. They also agreed to allow banks, insurers, and other financial-service providers to work in both markets. Taiwanese investment in those countries has also steadily increased. China is included in the RCEP but not in the CPTPP.)

Taiwan, a top semiconductor chip manufacturer, thrives despite cross-strait tensions. Its chips power electronics, including AI-based weaponry. U.S. reliance on Taiwanese chips heightens defense motivation. President Biden seeks to bolster the U.S. chip industry, with a \$280 billion bill passed by Congress in August 2022. This could limit China's tech sector, as it sourced about 70% of its chips from Taiwan before export controls.





# Potential Questions

Here are some questions to potentially think about as you do your research and formulate your country's position on this topic. You do not need to address them all in your paper, if any at all.

These are just some starting points for debate in committee and your own position and agenda:

1. How does the "One-China Policy" impact Taiwan's international recognition and diplomatic relations?
2. What are the implications of Taiwan's exclusion from full United Nations membership on international cooperation, global governance, and regional stability?
3. How does Taiwan's participation in non-UN international organizations influence its global standing and contributions to various global issues?
4. What is the role of major world powers, such as the United States, in shaping the status and security of Taiwan?
5. How have recent political developments, both in Taiwan and the mainland, affected cross-strait relations and the global status of Taiwan?
6. What are the security implications of Taiwan's status, particularly in light of military tensions and the potential for conflict with the People's Republic of China?
7. What is the role of economic and trade relationships in shaping the international recognition and status of Taiwan, and how does it impact global supply chains and technology?
8. How does Taiwan's democratic system and respect for human rights contribute to its international image and influence?
9. What measures can be taken to address the ongoing tensions and disputes related to Taiwan's status in the international arena?



# Sources

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