China - Taiwan Relations

What is the issue?

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Taiwan’s fine balance in its relationship with China is coming under stress in recent times.

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What is the history and source of this tension?

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- The first known settlers in Taiwan are Austronesian tribal people thought to have come from modern day southern China.
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- After a brief spell as a Dutch colony (1624-1661) Taiwan was unquestionably administered by China from 1683 to 1895.
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- At the beginning of the 17th Century, significant numbers of migrants started arriving from China, often fleeing turmoil or hardship.
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- The descendants of these migrated people now make up by far the largest population group in Taiwan.
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- Following Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War in 1895, China ceded Taiwan to Japan.
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- But after World War Two, the Republic of China began ruling Taiwan, after Japan surrendered it back to China.
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- In the next few years, the then Kuomintang (KMT) government in China were beaten back by the Communist armies under Mao Zedong and they were fled

to Taiwan in 1949.
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- This group, referred to as Mainland Chinese, dominated Taiwan's politics for many years, even though they only account for 14% of the population.
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How does China view Taiwan?

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- After decades of hostile intentions and angry rhetoric, relations between China and Taiwan started improving in the 1980s.
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- China asserts that there is only “one China” and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of it.
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- China put forward a formula, known as "one country, two systems", under which both Beijing and Taipei agree that Taiwan belongs to China, while the two still disagree on which entity is China’s legitimate governing body.
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- The tacit agreement underlying the formula is that Taiwan will not seek independence.
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- China also stated its right to use "non-peaceful means" against Taiwan if it tried to secede from China.
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- Thus, China regards Taiwan as a breakaway province which it has vowed to retake, by force if necessary.
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What role does the US play?

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- The US is by far Taiwan's most important friend, and its only ally.
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- In 1979, US ended diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in order to concentrate on burgeoning ties with China.
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- However, it later revoked and passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which promises to supply Taiwan with defensive weapons, and stressed that any attack by China would be considered of "grave concern" to the US.

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- The Taiwan Travel Act aims to promote greater engagement between US and Taiwan.
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- US has also sought to leverage Taiwan to pressure China in the U.S.'s ongoing trade war.
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What is the position taken from the Taiwan side?

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- The diplomatic shift of the U.S. towards Taiwan have predictably angered Beijing.
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- China is believed to be applying overt and covert pressure to stop countries from according diplomatic recognition to Taipei.
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- Accordingly, a number of African and Central American states have withdrawn formal ties with Taipei and established links with China.
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- However, Taiwan did not want to jeopardise the strong trade relations between the two territories.
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- In a recent referendum, the Taiwanese rejected a proposal to rename the country's Olympic team as Taiwan, instead of the current Chinese Taipei.
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- The verdict is an indication of the limited support for independence and a greater preference to maintain the status quo.
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Source: The Hindu

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