



Ressort: Politik

The power of language between PRC and Taiwan

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The power of language to shape our realities and our lives seems immeasurable and the evidence can be found in the recent case of dispute between People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC). Anyway, the situation was almost immediately deemed by the White House as "Orwellian nonsense."

Taiwan, known by its official title of the Republic of China, has gone through a period of rapid economic growth

since the 1960s. Occupied by the Qing dynasty in the late 1600s, Taiwan was later ceded to Japan in 1895 by imperial China in accordance with a treaty that ended the Sino-Japanese War. Japan governed it as a colony until 1945, when Japanese forces on the island surrendered to Chiang Kai-shek's ROC military forces. Taiwan, home to twenty-three million people, has been governed independently from mainland China since 1949. On the other side, the People's Republic of China (PRC) views the island as a province.

A recent case created new frictions because of a letter addressed to 44 foreign airline companies, including the United States and American Airlines, sent in April by China's civil aviation authorities which demanded the airline carriers to remove Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau from the list of countries on their websites or other materials. The second economy in the world wants a language that insinuates that those territories are not fully independent and that Taiwan is viewed as part of China on their business website. That caused dissatisfaction and complaints from both the Taiwanese government and netizens. The civil war between the PRC and the ROC seems not over yet. Beijing and Taipei sharply disagree on the island's status.

The PRC asserts that there is only "one China" and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of it. Beijing says Taiwan is bound by an understanding reached in 1992 between representatives of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT) political party then ruling Taiwan. Referred to as the 1992 Consensus, it states that there is only "one China," but with differing readings, allowing both Beijing and Taipei to agree that Taiwan belongs to China, while the two still diverge on which is China's legitimate governing body.

Taiwan's election of President Tsai Ing-wen has brought a new light on cross-strait ties from Beijing and Xi Jinping has shown an inclination to use pressure to attempt to limit Tsai's ability to reset the island's

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relations with the mainland. For example, Beijing suspended a cross-strait communication mechanism with the main Taiwan liaison office in June 2016 because of Tsai's reluctance to adhere to the 1992 Consensus. Meanwhile, Taiwanese leaders consider the reestablishment of formal diplomatic relations with major powers and international organizations crucial if Taiwan is to survive separately from the Communist mainland.

Only twenty-two countries maintain diplomatic ties with the island and in particular Vatican. Taiwan's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. François Wu remarked on May 28th that Taiwan is at the front line of a campaign between democracies and PRC. And the statement is connected to the fact that on 29 January 1955 the US Congress passed what was officially called "The Formosa Resolution". This Bill, overwhelmingly approved by both the House and the Senate, committed the USA to defend "Formosa" as an integral part of US foreign policy.

At the moment there is no airline using "Taiwan" in its name and Beijing determined that foreign companies active in China should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China itself, respect Chinese laws and "the national sentiment of the Chinese people". A spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said: "It does not matter what the US says, it can not change the objective fact that there is only one China in the world and that Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are indivisible parts of Chinese territory". That of Taiwan keeps being the most delicate issue in South-East Asia.

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