



UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

BACKGROUND GUIDE

United Nations Security Council

Agenda: Addressing the Escalation of Hostilities in the Taiwan Strait and
Its Implications for Regional Security

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Letter from EB

Honourable Delegates,

It is with utmost honour and a profound sense of responsibility that we, the Executive Board, welcome you to the United Nations Security Council at KLE MUN, convened to deliberate upon one of the most pressing geopolitical flashpoints of our time – “Addressing the Escalation of Hostilities in the Taiwan Strait and Its Implications for Regional Security.”

In an increasingly multipolar world, the Taiwan Strait has emerged as a volatile theater where strategic interests, national sovereignty, and international law intersect – and often clash. The tensions simmering in this region have far-reaching consequences, not only for the immediate parties involved but for the entire Indo-Pacific and global stability at large. As future diplomats, it is your mandate to rise to the challenge of navigating this complex crisis with insight, balance, and diplomacy.

The Security Council, with its unique mandate to maintain international peace and security, serves as the ideal platform for this discourse. The nuances of power politics, military posturing, and diplomatic engagement will all play pivotal roles in your debate. The decisions and resolutions crafted in this committee may be simulated, but the ideas and strategies you bring forth carry the potential to shape real-world understanding.

This background guide will serve as your compass — offering you the historical context, current developments, key actors, and legal frameworks essential to understanding the crisis. We urge you, however, not to limit yourselves to its contents. Go beyond — examine strategic alliances, economic dependencies, and historical grievances. Engage critically, research thoroughly, and represent your nation's position with conviction and tact.

We are excited to witness the level of diplomacy, negotiation, and strategic thinking this committee demands. As members of the Executive Board, we are committed to facilitating an engaging, respectful, and intellectually stimulating environment for all delegates. Your participation here is not just an academic exercise; it is a rehearsal for the real-world responsibilities that many of you will take on in the years to come.

Let your voices echo the principles of peace, dialogue, and international cooperation.

With best regards,
Rishi D V
Chair, United Nations Security Council
KLE MUN

Overview of the UNSC

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, entrusted with the paramount responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Established in 1945 following the devastation of the Second World War, the UNSC holds a unique position within the international system, possessing the authority to issue binding resolutions, authorize military action, impose sanctions, and establish peacekeeping operations.

The Council is composed of 15 member states, five of which are permanent members (P5): China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These members hold veto power, enabling them to block the adoption of any substantive resolution. The remaining ten members are elected on a regional basis for two-year terms by the General Assembly.

The UNSC plays a vital role in responding to global crises, managing conflicts, and facilitating diplomatic solutions. It has the mandate to investigate disputes, recommend peaceful settlements, and, when necessary, take enforcement measures to restore or maintain international peace. Given the current geopolitical landscape, the Council's actions and decisions are often under intense global scrutiny and must balance legal, ethical, and strategic considerations.

In Model United Nations simulations, the UNSC is recognized as one of the most challenging and dynamic committees. Delegates are expected to think quickly, engage in high-level negotiation, and exhibit a deep understanding of both current events and the historical underpinnings of global conflicts. The presence of veto powers and the smaller number of members also means that consensus-building is both more immediate and more intricate. As you participate in this simulation, remember that your role mirrors that of actual policymakers tasked with safeguarding international peace. Your debates should reflect the gravity, complexity, and urgency that define the work of the United Nations Security Council.

Key Concepts:

This section outlines and defines critical terms and ideas relevant to the agenda. Understanding these concepts will help delegates frame arguments, analyze developments, and craft effective resolutions:

1. Sovereignty

The principle that a state has full control over its own territory and domestic affairs, free from external interference. Central to the Taiwan Strait conflict.

2. One-China Policy

A diplomatic acknowledgement by most countries, including the U.S., that there is only one Chinese government. However, its interpretation varies and is at the heart of tensions involving Taiwan's status.

3. Status Quo

A term often used to refer to the current, albeit ambiguous, arrangement where Taiwan operates with de facto independence but is not officially recognized as a sovereign state by most nations.

4. Strategic Ambiguity

A policy particularly followed by the United States to deter both China from invading Taiwan and Taiwan from declaring independence, by not clearly stating whether it would intervene militarily.

5. Freedom of Navigation

The principle that ships flying the flag of any sovereign state shall not suffer interference from other states, crucial in the Taiwan Strait given its significance to global trade routes.

6. Security Dilemma

A situation in which one state's actions to increase its security cause insecurity in others, leading to escalating tensions — frequently observed in military build-ups in East Asia.

7. Balance of Power

A concept in international relations where power is distributed among nations so that no single state dominates. Central to understanding regional responses to China's growing influence.

8. Cross-Strait Relations

Refers to the political, military, and economic interactions between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan).

9. Veto Power

The ability of any of the five permanent UNSC members to block the adoption of any substantive resolution. Highly relevant when consensus on security matters involving major powers is difficult to achieve.

Delegates are encouraged to refer to these concepts throughout their preparation and committee sessions to enrich debate and refine their diplomatic strategies.

Historical Background: The Taiwan Strait Crisis

The Taiwan Strait has long been a focal point of strategic tension between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC, or Taiwan), with broader implications for global geopolitics. The root of the crisis dates back to the Chinese Civil War (1927–1949), which ended with the Communist Party of China establishing the PRC on the mainland, while the defeated Nationalist forces (Kuomintang) retreated to Taiwan. Since then, Beijing has viewed Taiwan as a breakaway province, while Taiwan has developed into a democratic, self-governed entity with its own government, economy, and military.

Three major Taiwan Strait Crises have shaped the current security dynamics:

First Taiwan Strait Crisis (1954–1955):

This crisis began when the PRC started shelling the offshore islands of Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu, which were under the control of the Republic of China (Taiwan). China aimed to test the United States' commitment to Taiwan and pressure the ROC to relinquish control of these strategic islands. In response, the United States signed the Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan and positioned the Seventh Fleet to deter further aggression. The crisis highlighted Cold War tensions and reinforced U.S. military backing for Taiwan, solidifying a defensive perimeter against Communist expansion in East Asia.

Second Taiwan Strait Crisis (1958)

Tensions reignited when the PRC resumed heavy artillery bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu. The United States responded with strong military support, including the airlifting of supplies and deploying naval forces. American warships escorted ROC supply ships, and advanced weaponry was provided to Taiwan. This show of force, including the use of Sidewinder missiles by Taiwanese forces, effectively deterred a full-scale invasion. Though the shelling continued intermittently, the crisis underscored the volatile nature of cross-strait relations and the U.S. policy of military deterrence.

Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995–1996):

The most politically charged of the three crises, this confrontation was triggered by the U.S. granting a visa to Taiwan's then-president Lee Teng-hui to speak at Cornell University. Interpreting this as a move toward formal independence, the PRC launched a series of ballistic missile tests and large-scale military exercises in waters surrounding Taiwan. In a major show of force, the United States deployed two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region. The crisis culminated with Taiwan's first direct presidential election, which Beijing sought to influence through intimidation. Ultimately, the U.S. presence helped ensure a peaceful vote, but the episode marked a turning point in China's approach to Taiwan, increasing its focus on military modernization and asymmetric warfare.

Since the 1990s, tensions have ebbed and flowed, influenced by Taiwan's elections, U.S.-China relations, and regional power shifts. Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of hostilities due to:

- Increasing Chinese military incursions into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ)
- U.S. arms sales and high-level visits to Taiwan
- Taiwan's growing global diplomatic engagement
- Heightened rhetoric from Beijing on reunification

Stakeholders Involved

- People's Republic of China
- Republic of China (Taiwan)
- United States
- Japan
- ASEAN
- Australia
- European Union
- United Nations (and particularly UNSC permanent members)

International Legal Frameworks

- UN Charter (Chapter VI & VII)
- One-China Policy vs. One-China Principle
- Taiwan Relations Act (U.S.)
- Montevideo Convention (statehood criteria)
- Law of the Sea (regarding Taiwan Strait's status)

Current Situation

The Taiwan Strait remains one of the world's most strategically sensitive regions, and recent developments have dramatically intensified global concern. Tensions between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) have escalated due to a convergence of political, military, and economic factors — with significant involvement from external powers like the United States and its allies.

Military Activity:

China has drastically increased its military presence around Taiwan. Regular sorties into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), large-scale naval exercises in the waters surrounding the island, and simulated blockades are now frequent. The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has deployed aircraft carriers, drones, and missile systems near the strait, signaling a readiness to act militarily if necessary. In response, Taiwan has intensified its defensive posturing, including upgrading missile systems and increasing reserve training.

U.S. Involvement and Arms Sales:

The United States, while maintaining its "One China" policy, continues to deepen informal ties with Taiwan. Arms sales, naval transits through the Taiwan Strait, and congressional visits have drawn sharp criticism from Beijing. The 2022 and 2023 visits of high-level U.S. officials to Taipei provoked particularly strong reactions from China, which launched unprecedented military drills in retaliation.

Political Developments:

Taiwan's political leadership under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) continues to assert its democratic identity and international presence. The 2024 presidential elections reaffirmed public support for a government that resists Chinese pressure. Meanwhile, Beijing's rhetoric has grown more aggressive, with Chinese officials refusing to rule out the use of force to achieve reunification.

Economic Interdependence and Strategic Assets:

Despite military tensions, China and Taiwan remain economically intertwined, especially in the semiconductor sector. Taiwan's Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is a global leader in chip production, making the island a critical node in global supply chains. The potential disruption of this industry due to conflict is a major concern for economies worldwide.

International Alignments:

Global powers are increasingly vocal. Japan, Australia, the EU, and members of the Quad (U.S., India, Australia, Japan) have called for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. NATO has even acknowledged the strategic implications of developments in the Indo-Pacific, marking a significant geopolitical shift.

Cyber and Hybrid Threats:

Taiwan continues to face a barrage of cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and psychological operations from China. These non-conventional threats are part of Beijing's broader strategy to undermine public trust in the Taiwanese government and erode its international legitimacy.

As tensions mount, the potential for a miscalculation or unintended escalation has grown alarmingly high. The role of international institutions, especially the United Nations Security Council, in promoting dialogue and preventing conflict, has never been more urgent.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

- What measures can be taken by the international community to prevent further escalation in the Taiwan Strait without infringing upon national sovereignty?
- How can the UNSC encourage diplomatic dialogue between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) while respecting existing international frameworks?
- What role should external actors, such as the United States and regional allies, play in de-escalating military tensions in the Taiwan Strait?
- How can the UNSC ensure the safety and security of international trade routes and critical supply chains passing through the Taiwan Strait?
- What frameworks can be adopted to address cyber and hybrid threats targeting Taiwan from state or non-state actors?
- In what ways can the Council reinforce the principles of the UN Charter in light of increasing power rivalries and threats to peace?

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