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Ressort: Politik

## Taiwan between USA and PRC

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Taiwan remains a matter of the utmost importance in the dispute between the United States and China. After a relatively quiet interlude of twenty years, the geopolitical importance of the former island of Formosa is coming to the fore again emphatically. At the diplomatic level on March 16th, the Taiwan Travel Act came into force, that is a US measure that encourages the exchange of visits

between senior US and Taiwanese officials. That provoked the indignation of Beijing. The American Institute of Taiwan was also inaugurated, and described by its president James Moriarty as a cornerstone of the bilateral relations between Washington and Taipei.

Strategically, Taiwan is part of the USA anti-Chinese containment that goes from Japan to India, passing through South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam. A fence held together by the United States to inhibit China and prevent Beijing from expanding its influence in East Asia. Taipei in this frame is a sort of US aircraft carrier pointing to the Chinese territory.

Beijing wants to annex Taiwan by 2050, the year after the centenary of the founding of the People's Republic.

Reunification is considered a vital part of the "national resurgence" process wanted by Xi Jinping, which should be completed by the middle of the century.

However, the road leading to the solution of the Taiwanese question is paved with obstacles. To begin with, the Taiwanese Democratic Progressive Party (PPD) went to the government in May 2016 and now controls both the executive and parliament. The PPD rejects the "one country, two systems" principle promoted by Beijing and is apparently pro-independence (an impassable red line for Beijing), despite President Tsai Ing-wen tried to dampen the tension by claiming that she wishes to maintain the status quo and guarantee peace.

Before the arrival of the PPD, the Chinese envisaged to achieve a peaceful unification through unilateral economic concessions to Taiwan that step by step would transform a sort of economic interdependence into political influence. However, this plan has generated a ferment of independence in the Taiwanese population, fearful of losing its de facto independence, and that ended with occupation of Parliament by the Movement of Sunflowers in 2014. Put aside the hypothesis of unification achieved only through economic means, Xi's new plan would be to attract more and more Taiwanese people to the People's Republic guaranteeing equal treatment and considerable economic opportunities and consequently seeking to achieve

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initially a social

integration and, later, a political one.

Beijing is working toward a destabilization of Taiwan also by disarticulating its network of diplomatic relations and alliances. In fact, China is "buying", one after another, the countries that have relations with Taipei, the last in terms have been Burkina Faso and the Dominican Republic, which in return for the economic benefits promised by the PRC have put an end to their diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Today, there are less than twenty states that have diplomatic relations with the former island of Formosa: mostly small Pacific States and the Vatican.

The United States formally supports the One China Policy, which recognizes only one China since 1979. This notwithstanding, the "rebel province" of Taiwan continues to be a useful tool for the Americans to exert a pressure on the People's Republic and an important leverage to redefine relations. For these reasons, the US is today the main sponsor of the island security and is increasing its military supplies to Taipei. The Taiwanese armed forces will soon acquire one hundred US tanks M1A2 Abrams to revive their armored forces, replacing the obsolete M60 and M48.

There's an implementation of the "multiple deterrence" strategy against possible military invasions. Taipei is negotiating with the United States a possible acquisition of the F-35B (short take-off version and vertical landing), which would guarantee considerable flexibility in case of war with China, not needing long runways, extremely vulnerable to Chinese ballistic missiles. The United States will continue to exploit Taiwan as a negotiating weapon and instrument of pressure towards Beijing, in accordance with the containment strategy of PRC that will be strengthened in the coming years. In favor of Taiwan an indisputably decisive match of this geopolitical confrontation at global level will be played.

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