

**FACULTAT DE TRADUCCIÓ I D'INTERPRETACIÓ  
GRAU D'ESTUDIS D'ÀSIA ORIENTAL**

**TREBALL FI DE GRAU**

# **International Relations of Taiwan: the Republic of China in the International Setting**

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Barcelona, June 2015



**Universitat Autònoma  
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## 1. Introduction

The name Taiwan refers to an island surrounded by the Pacific Ocean, more specifically the East China Sea, Philippine Sea, and South China Sea, lying some 180 kilometers off the southeastern coast of continental China, on the opposite side of the Taiwan Strait (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). For many years, from as early as 1542, it had been known to Western explorers as *Formosa*, from *Ilha Formosa*, or “beautiful island” in Portuguese (Government Information Office, 2011: 46), a name that bears witness to the beginnings of colonization in the island, a period that would last for the largest part of its history, before its population would seek to identify itself as a nation. Analyzing the international relations of an island with such complex history therefore becomes an exceptionally intricate task.

When discussing the international relations of Taiwan, there are numerous concepts that need to be outlined and defined before an actual coherent analysis can be made. There is a wide consensus amongst professionals on the definition of international relations, which, for the procedure of this paper, is the relationship of a state with other states and with international organizations and other multinational entities. The problem arises when defining Taiwan, known as the Republic of China (ROC) at present, and outlining the scope of relations that can be included in the analysis. This problem exists because there is no formal worldwide consensus on the definition of the identity of Taiwan, nor on the international status the Republic of China holds, a disagreement that takes form within the limits of Taiwan itself and only expands and grows more complex as it starts to involve the international community.

The purpose of this project is to analyze the international relations of Taiwan as an island, from their earliest trace to their current state, in order to hypothesize on their future and possible evolution. The topic of Taiwan, currently the Republic of China, is a very delicate one which must be handled with careful terminology and unbiased commentary. In order to properly analyze and conjecture on the international relations of Taiwan, the project must first objectively present the complexity of the identity of the Taiwanese island through its history and, consequently, clarify which modern definition of “state” will be applied to Taiwan and used to carry out the analysis. Once the definition has been clarified, the project will proceed to introduce the history of the international relations of Taiwan, summarizing a timeline that spans

from the conception of a governmental body in the island up until the inclusion of the ROC in the United Nations. This will be done with the purpose of gaining a solid perspective on the trajectory of the international relations of Taiwan, leading up to the participation in the Council of the United Nations by the government of the ROC. The project will then delineate and analyze the most crucial timeline of events in regards to the international relations of Taiwan, from the participation of the ROC in the United Nations up to their current status today, in order to comprehend the importance and long-lasting effect that joining such an intergovernmental organization had on the rank of Taiwan in the international setting, as well as the consequences that followed when the Republic of China no longer held a seat.

## **2. Brief History of Taiwan**

### **2.1. The First Inhabitants of “Formosa”**

The first inhabitants of the Taiwanese island were a mixed group of “natives” or “aboriginals,” around 50,000 in number as estimated by the first foreign Dutch settlers. A community of Chinese fishermen, pirates, and traders originally from the mainland later established themselves on the island as well, a group of somewhere in between 1,000 and 1,500 (Lu, 2010: 28). At present day, Taiwan holds their aboriginal population in very high esteem, yet there is no consensus on the earliest origins of these islanders, as, according to the Government Information Office, the first inhabitants of the island “left no written records of their origins” and bases its guesses on language studies, prehistoric artifacts, and other items found in sites around the Taiwanese island. Anthropological evidence suggests 3 lines of descent: proto-Malayan, Indonesian, and the southernmost part of mainland China (Government Information Office, 2011: 46). This evidence implies, from its earliest introduction to the international setting, that the Taiwanese island was home to an intricate society of various origins. The Taiwan the world knows today was first introduced to the international setting as Formosa in 1542, when Portuguese sailors on their way to Japan “were struck by the beauty of its mountains and dubbed it “Ilha Formosa,” meaning “beautiful isle”” (Government Information Office, 2011: 46). The first Westerners to formally reach Taiwan, however, were not the Portuguese, but the Dutch, who

settled along the southwestern coast of the island after being driven away from the Chinese coastline by the Ming dynasty. The Dutch colony, on their way to dominating world commerce with the Dutch East India Company, first set up base near present-day Tainan in 1624 (Government Information Office, 2011: 46).

## **2.2. The First Colonizers of Taiwan**

If up until that point Taiwan had been a paradise of sorts, a beautiful island hidden from the interests of the expanding Western influence, the arrival of the Dutch traders marked the beginning of Taiwan as a colonized territory. The period of colonization lasted more than 300 years, during which the Taiwanese island developed its identity under the foreign rule of different empires. The strategic interest of the Dutch in Taiwan and their settlement in 1624 brought the island out of hiding straight into the colonization plans of many colonial giants (Lu, 2010: 30). After setting base, first with a temporary fort and later with their most famous fortress, Fort Zeelandia (presently Anping Fort) (National Palace Museum, 2003), the Dutch began to oversee trade of the Dutch East India Company in the region, meanwhile expanding their settlement on the island and establishing a makeshift governing body. The period of Dutch rule on Taiwan, however, was rather tumultuous, as it required cooperating with the Chinese and Japanese merchants and pirates to sustain profitable trade and controlling the various aboriginal groups to maintain peace on the island (Andrade, 2008).

During the Dutch rule on the southern part of the island, their Spanish rivals took the northernmost part, setting up a fort in present-day Keelung in 1626, only two years after the establishment of the Dutch colony. Those under the Spanish Crown were quick to build more forts along the northern coast, most notably Fort San Domingo in Tamsui, and within a decade they managed to bring most of northern Taiwan under the control of their colony (Andrade, 2008). For 16 years, the Dutch and Spanish colonies coexisted with rivalry and hostility in the two cardinal extremes of the island, but the Spanish were too preoccupied with their main colony, the Philippines, and the religious conquest of the East Asian region to properly administer their Taiwanese colony. Towards the end of the 1630's, losing strategic interest in the island, the Spanish governor in Manila called for the dismantling of smaller forts in Taiwan and the return

of troops to the Philippines (Andrade, 2008). Shortly after a failed attempt in 1641, the Dutch launched a definitive attack on the Spanish fort at Keelung in 1642, expelling their rivals and gaining control over the totality of the Taiwanese island (Lu, 2010: 32).

The colonial reign of the Dutch did not last much longer than that of the Spanish, and after an attack on the colony in 1661, the Dutch governor of the island surrendered the last standing fort under siege, Fort Zeelandia, to Zheng Cheng-gong in February of 1662 (Lu, 2010: 35). Zheng Cheng-gong, popularly known as Koxinga, was “the most important leader of the Chinese imperial army” in the latter half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the Manchu invaded the north of China and installed the Qing Dynasty in the capital of the empire, while the Ming fled south to resist the invasion (Lu, 2010: 43). Zheng, fighting for the restoration of the Ming, saw the Taiwanese island as a potential base from which he could fortify his armies and launch a definitive attack on the Qing forces (Lu, 2010: 44). Needless to say, the victories never came and the Qing Dynasty remained in power for almost three centuries, but Zheng was still responsible for the establishment of the first Chinese government on the island and bringing Taiwan into the Chinese fold of history (Andrade, 2008).

### **2.3. Chinese Taiwan**

The process of “Formosa” or the Taiwanese island becoming Chinese did not start with Zheng Cheng-gong’s regime. Chinese merchants, fishermen, and pirates originally from the mainland had inhabited the island for many years before the European colonists reached Taiwan, and the aboriginals are hypothesized to have come from the southernmost part of China themselves. The first waves of mass Chinese immigration to the island began with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company, when the Dutch promoted currents of Chinese immigration to work in Taiwan for the expansion and maintenance of the colony. More than 20,000 Chinese workers migrated to Taiwan during the reign of the Dutch (Lu, 2010: 33).

The waves of immigration continued after Zheng took over Taiwan and established the Kingdom of Tungning (also known as the Kingdom of Formosa and the Kingdom of Taiwan (Kerr, 1945: 81), among many other names) along with its first Chinese government. With this kingdom in power, many Ming Dynasty survivors and military soldiers who fled the Qing

Empire migrated to Taiwan (Ma, 2007). Upon realizing it would take much longer to launch a successful attack on the Qing territory from Taiwan in order to reinstall the Ming Dynasty back into power, Zheng inaugurated an administration in the style of the old Ming government on the island, politically proper and complete with different departments divided to more effectively govern the temporary Kingdom (Lin and Keating, 2005). However, this Chinese kingdom was as short lived as the previous European colonies. In 1683, after only 22 years of rule and two years of internal turmoil on the island over the lack of a rightful successor to the throne, the Kingdom of Tungning surrendered without resistance to the Qing Dynasty following a streak of defeats on sea (Lu, 2010: 46). With this surrender, the former Kingdom of Tungning became part of the Fujian province, bringing Taiwan into the Chinese territory for the very first time (Copper, 2000: 10).

At this point in time, the Taiwanese island had become a part of China, but the annexation was not formalized. Taiwan had never been of any interest to the courts of Beijing, and the Qing government felt no differently: it is said that the Manchu were in favor of returning the Chinese population on the island to the mainland and abandoning Taiwan altogether (Lu, 2010: 46). Taiwan was annexed not as a province, but as a part of an already existing province (Fujian), and the mountainous regions of the island were excluded. The name “Taiwan,” however, was officially recognized by China (Lu, 2010: 47). It wasn’t until 1885, after the French attempted to invade Taiwan, that the island became a separate province (Lu, 2010: 50). During the period of Qing rule over Taiwan, China “alternately banned or encouraged immigration to Taiwan,” but the waves of Chinese immigrants to the island in this period of history were some of the largest and most important (Ma, 2007). With more immigration, the population of the island grew more complex, and its identity was developed even further by another foreign influence in the government, this time the Manchu.

Qing reign over Taiwan and, naturally, the entirety of the Chinese territory, was uninterrupted for many years, more than two centuries. Over this span of history, the island underwent many changes, most notably *sinicization*, *mestization*, and general economic growth (Lu, 2010: 50). The interruption happened in 1895, at the conclusion of the First Sino-Japanese War, when Qing China surrendered to a victorious Japan and both parties signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The main clause of the treaty, with the most impact in the international setting, was the ceding of the Taiwanese island to the Japanese Empire, a strategic vantage point for the

expansionist agenda of the Japanese. Taiwan, thoroughly sinicized at this point and with a fully functioning governmental body, put up their strongest resistance. Before any actual Japanese presence reached the island, the Taiwanese inhabitants heard word of the Sino-Japanese treaty and felt extremely betrayed by the Qing government. As an act of protest and resistance, in May of 1895, the Taiwanese declared themselves independent from China, under the name of The Democratic Republic of Formosa (Lu, 2010: 57). For a number of months, Taiwan existed in the international setting as an independent republic with a modern functioning government. The glory of this republic, however, was short lived, and only lasted during the five months in which the nationalistic forces attempted to hold back the Japanese invasion. By the end of the same year, and having met little resistance, the Japanese had total control of the island, which was to once more become a colony of an expansionist empire, and the Democratic Republic of Formosa was officially dissolved (Lu, 2010: 59).

When discussing Taiwan as a colony of the Japanese Empire, one must note its population was mostly of Chinese descent or directly from the Chinese mainland. The Japanese, like the Dutch and the Spanish before them, were solely a foreign colonizing force that took the island against the will of its inhabitants, only this time, the complex society was a lot more unified. Under the reign of the Japanese Empire, immigration from China was eliminated and, instead, the government “focused inward and succeeded in transforming Taiwan from a frontier to an orderly society” (Lin, 2012). As the current president of the ROC, Ma Ying-jeou once said, “[the Japanese] ruled for fifty years and they left impact on the society, culture, economy and political system” (Ma, 2007). In conclusion, the benefits of Japanese colonization were many, but they were not the rightful governors of the island. Japan went on to control the colony of Taiwan until their defeat in the end of World War II, but the governing body of the Taiwan the world recognizes today, the ROC, was born long before that.

## **2.4. The Republic of China**

The Republic of China, *Zhonghua Minguo* in Chinese, was a republican government born in China in 1912 established in order to overthrow the Qing monarchy and put an end to over two millennia of successive imperial rule (Ye, Fei and Wang, 2007: 116). Before it became the



rightful government of the Taiwan the world knows today, the ROC was created to rule the mainland and all the Chinese people, a native, modern alternative to the foreign Manchu dynasty. When analyzing the international relations of Taiwan, it is of utmost importance to discuss the foundation of the ROC in 1912 to truly understand where the original government of the island at present day was created and what ideologies it promoted before establishing itself in Taiwan at a later date. It is also a key factor to further understanding the deeply rooted ties between the Taiwanese island and mainland China, still to this day.

While the Japanese still reigned supreme over their Taiwanese colony, in continental China, the ROC faced a rocky start. Sun Yat-sen was legitimately elected president of the republic but, lacking the military support to fully overthrow the Qing rulers, the presidency was handed over to Yuan Shi-kai, a man who lost sight of the initial aspirations of the republic and nearly led it to its downfall with his “autocratic ambitions” (Lu, 2010: 68). In parallel, the Kuomintang (KMT, Guomindang, or the Chinese Nationalistic Party) was also officially founded by Sun Yat-sen and Song Jiao-ren in 1912 (Lu, 2010: 68), another important date, as the Kuomintang remains the ruling political party of the ROC today.

In China, the KMT was temporarily dismantled and Sun sent into exile while the republican government struggled to hold on to their recently acquired power and, in 1921, the Communist Party of China (CPC) was founded (Lu, 2010: 69). With the creation of these two political parties, the struggle for power began, and a few tumultuous decades followed, those in which the Chinese Civil War took place. After the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek rose to power and, with the help of CPC members initially, he began his attempt to unify the country (Chang, 2007: 126). However, hostility had been high, and the struggle for power intensified afterwards, when the KMT turned against the growing CPC and its dictatorship proved to be overly fragile (Lu, 2010: 70).

During the struggle between the two parties and the civil war that had broken out, the Japanese Empire (which was in control of Taiwan at that moment) invaded China from the north, and Chiang was forced to unite with the communists to fight off the Japanese forces. A truce was called and the fighting temporarily stopped, but the cooperation during this Second Sino-Japanese War and into World War II proved to be minimal (Bianco and Bell, 1971: 68). While the KMT took the brunt of the battle, the CPC engaged in guerrilla warfare from the countryside, operations of very limited military effect. This was decisive, however, as the communists gave

the image of having taken on all the fighting against the Japanese and consequently gained a large base of support, while the KMT received the most damage and losses (Lary, 2007).

Following the surrender of Imperialist Japan and the end of World War II in the West, the civil war in China resumed, but the island of Taiwan, formerly under Japan and now under provisional influence of the interests of the United States of America, was “returned” to the ROC (Lu, 2010: 70). While the KMT was fighting the last years of the civil war in the mainland, Chiang set up a unified government in the Taiwanese island and declared it a part of China, which many Taiwanese celebrated as a “reunification” (Lu, 2010: 71). Shortly after, due to grave wartime conditions and with the immigration ban of the Japanese lifted, many Chinese citizens fled to Taiwan. In between KMT envoys sent to govern in the stead of Chiang and the masses fleeing the civil war, the influx of immigrants to the island after 1945 is estimated to be around two millions (Ma, 2007). Most of these crossed the Taiwan Strait in 1949, when the KMT lost the civil war and the CPC took total control of the mainland, and Chiang retreated to Taiwan with his troops, where he governed, much like Zheng Cheng-gong, with the main objective of reconquering all of China (Lu, 2010: 74). From that moment on, the ROC (which had governed all of China since 1912 and acquired the Taiwanese island in 1945) became the official government of Taiwan only.

## **2.5 The Road to Democracy**

From the moment World War II ended in Asia and Taiwan was “returned” to the ROC, the island entered “the camp of capitalism and a long period of martial law” (Ma, 2007). At the same time, the ideology behind both the KMT and the CPC in 1949 must be emphasized: while the power of the ROC was limited to the Taiwanese island, Penghu, Jinmen, Mazu, and a few other islets, the KMT claimed to govern the entirety of the Chinese territory (that is, mainland China and Taiwan) from their newly established capital, Taipei (Lu, 2010: 74). The CPC, having established the People’s ROC (PRC) in the same year with Beijing as the capital, also claimed to govern the whole territory. Here, the concept of “One China” was born, and while both the ROC and the PRC recognize Taiwan as a province of China, neither government has been able to

exercise sovereignty over the other: the ROC has no political power over the Chinese mainland, and the PRC has no power over the Taiwanese island (Lu, 2010: 75). This concept is crucial to understanding the development of events during the era of the Cold War and into the new millennium.

To road to present-day democracy was a gruesome one for the ROC. After gaining control of Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek sent Chen Yi, a military general, to govern in his stead, but the joy of the Taiwanese at being returned to the Chinese fold soon turned into tension and social unrest. The new government did not understand the Taiwanese people. There were no Taiwanese officials; all the members had come from the southern provinces of China (Lai, Myers and Wei, 1991: 61). Governmental corruption, bad leadership, and an economic crisis, along with linguistic and cultural barriers between the recently arrived mainland Chinese and the Taiwanese born in the colony who only spoke Japanese, all eventually led to a large social uprising in February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1947, known and remembered today as the 228 Incident (Lai, Myers and Wei, 1991: 51). As a result of the tragic accident, thousands took to the streets of Taipei to demand that government officials who had “accidentally shot and killed an innocent passerby while beating a female vendor who was peddling unlicensed cigarettes” be turned in and pay for their crimes. Protesters at the scene were shot by law enforcement officials, and this triggered a mass revolt, led by pent-up anger and frustration, which was silenced by mainland troops (The Memorial Foundation of 228, 2011). A period of “white terror” and perpetual martial law followed for 38 years, during which the martial government brutally suppressed all uprisings and executed any suspected opposition (Rubinstein, 2007: 302). In between 18,000 and 28,000 Taiwanese were killed in the events and following the events of the 228 Incident (New Taiwan, 2007).

Chiang Kai-shek maintained an authoritarian, single-party form of government until his death in 1975, but his son, Chiang Ching-kuo, who took office as President of the ROC in 1978, paved the way to an abundance of reforms. His economical reforms modernized the infrastructures and focused on the production of technology, solidifying the position of the Taiwanese island as one of the “Four Asian Tigers” (Lu, 2010: 78). Although he initially upheld many autocratic policies, Chiang Ching-kuo most notably ended the martial law in 1978, loosened political control over the freedom of speech of the opposition, and legalized political parties (Lu, 2010: 85). Following his reforms and death in 1988, the public demand for democracy grew nonstop.

In the same year, Li Deng-hui was elected as the successor of Chiang Ching-kuo and the first *bensheng ren*<sup>1</sup> president of the ROC, or the first Taiwanese-born to ascend to the presidency (Lu, 2010: 86). Under his rule, the republic took the last definitive steps towards a democracy. His reforms included dissolving and reelecting the National Assembly to include mostly *bensheng ren*, amending the Constitution, bringing an end to the suppressive ways of the government, and returning the fundamental rights and liberties to the citizens of the nation (Lu, 2010: 86). Li is most notably remembered for holding the first direct public presidential elections of the ROC in 1996, in which he was reelected for a second term by the Taiwanese population (Lu, 2010: 86).

## 2.6 The New Generation

After Li Deng-hui held the first democratic elections in the history of the island and new political parties started to form and gain following, the citizens of Taiwan started to question the validity of the “One China” concept. The Kuomintang, which had originally relocated their government to the island with the sole objective of reuniting with the mainland, gradually began to weaken and, eventually, many of its members broke off into new parties. Li himself joined one of these parties after being held responsible for the loss in the 2000 elections, in which the KMT lost power over the ROC after having held it uninterrupted since its creation in 1912 (Lu, 2010: 86). The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the elections in 2000 due to the split in votes of KMT supporters, and Chen Shui-bian ascended to the presidency (Niou and Paolino, 2003). The DPP was in power for two consecutive terms, and the current president of the ROC, Ma Ying-jeou, was elected in 2008, bringing the KMT back into power.

With the ascent to power of the DPP, a separatist party that centers its ideologies on the independence of the republic and the nationalistic sentiments of the Taiwanese, the identity of the island and its inhabitants has been questioned nonstop ever since. The two main political parties, the KMT and the DPP, and their supporters face off in a constant debate of “One China” and reunification policies versus separatism and Taiwanese identity, and the DPP went as far as to encourage every citizen of the republic to proclaim their stances with respects to the political

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<sup>1</sup> 本省人 (*bensheng ren*, literally “people of the province”) refers to Han Chinese people who immigrated to Taiwan before 1945 and their descendants, as opposed to 外省人 (*waisheng ren*), which refers to Han Chinese who moved to the island after 1945.

future of Taiwan (Lu, 2010: 87). The new generation of Taiwanese, born on the island and long after the remnants of Japanese colonization and civil war, far from mainland ties and wishes of reunification, are likely to decide the future of the republic in the coming years, and may choose to push the island towards one extreme or the other, or adhere to the current status quo.

### **3. Brief Introduction to the History of International Relations in Taiwan**

When discussing the international relations of Taiwan, a legitimate government with sovereignty over the Taiwanese territory must exist to carry out the diplomatic relations. During the four centuries of Taiwanese history presented in this project, for a majority of the time span, the island was under the control of a foreign government and did not have the tools to make its own political decisions. Under the Dutch and Spanish colonizers, the Japanese empire, and even under the Qing Dynasty, Taiwan did not have sovereignty over itself. Only with the creation of the ROC and its relocation to the Taiwanese island did Taiwan have the governmental tools to carry out normalized relations with other nations in the international setting. In order to analyze the international relations of Taiwan, the timeline of the analysis will begin with the end of World War II in 1945, when Taiwan was handed back to the ROC and the government joined the United Nations. However, for the sake of contextualizing the events and better understanding the timeline choice, the project will first briefly introduce the history of international relations in Taiwan.

When the Dutch and Spanish colonizers first arrived to Taiwan in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was no trace of a modern government on the island, only tribes and their respective chiefdoms (Campbell, 1972). It can be argued that the first form of a legitimate government created on the island was the Kingdom of Tungning, when Zheng Cheng-gong established a politically proper government in the style of the Ming Dynasty. While the kingdom was short-lived and the government erected with the hopes of reconquering the mainland from the Qing Dynasty, it cannot be denied that the government had sovereignty over the territory and was fully capable of conducting international relations. However, during the 22 years the Kingdom of Tungning held power, international affairs mostly focused on trade with European and other Asian countries (Rubinstein, 2007). Their diplomatic relations were limited to the Chinese mainland, as was the

case of their wartime diplomacy with China when the Qing attacked and eventually ended the reign of the Zheng. In the grand scheme of Taiwanese international relations, these time period hardly constitutes as the birthplace of their modern diplomacy, although it did set the note in some aspects. For example, the ROC, much like the Kingdom of Tungning, established its government in Taiwan with the objective of using as a military base to reconquer the mainland. The members of the Kuomintang, much like the Zheng Dynasty, were foreign rulers who brought with them waves of Chinese immigration to the island and governed over the native Taiwanese people, often with a lack of cultural understanding.

As a province of China under the Qing Dynasty and later a colony of the Japanese Empire, all forms of self-governance were suspended and Taiwan lost the tools it had acquired to carry out diplomatic relations. It was not until the island was handed back to the ROC, the legitimate government of Taiwan at present day, that the it recovered the ability to engage in foreign diplomacy. However, when the republic was first conceived in 1912, it governed all of China, and Taiwan was merely a province: it continued to have no tools for international relations. Therefore, the question at hand is whether the diplomatic affairs of the ROC prior to their relocation to Taiwan in 1949 can be considered Taiwanese affairs. Even in 1949, when the republic found its sovereignty limited to the Taiwanese island, its ideology was still that of “One China,” and in claiming that it ruled over the entirety of China, the republic implied that its foreign diplomacy represented China, not only Taiwan.

For the sake of a more concise analysis, the project understands that, even to this day, the ROC (with the KMT currently in power) continues to promote the concept of “One China,” and that this ideological factor does not affect the official span of its sovereignty. As a result, the analysis will begin in 1949, when the ROC fled to the island and proclaimed itself the legitimate government of Taiwan, therefore marking the birth of Taiwanese international relations. The timeline will run until present day and attempt to portray the evolution of Taiwanese diplomacy in the international setting.

The factor that can be questioned here is the degree of legitimacy of the ROC as an independent state. Although both the ROC and the PRC claimed to govern the same territory, it is obvious that only one government can have legitimate sovereignty over the land. The ROC ruled the entirety of the Chinese territory for over three decades, but in the current setting, it exerts no power of China, and the PRC does not exert full power over Taiwan. However, while

almost governmental body or international organization today doubts the legitimacy of the PRC, the “One China” policy makes most question the authenticity of the ROC.

Is the ROC an independent state? In theory, the ROC is a sovereign state, defined as a “nonphysical juridical entity that is represented by one centralized government that has sovereignty over a geographic area.” International law indicates that sovereign states must have “a permanent population, defined territory, one government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other sovereign states” (Shaw, 2003). This makes the ROC a *de facto* sovereign state. The difference between *de facto* and *de jure* lies in recognition of other sovereign states in the international setting, as being a sovereign state in theory but not acquiring mutual recognition prevents the state from boasting of *de jure* sovereignty (Krasner, 2001). In present day, only 22 sovereign states recognize the legitimacy of the ROC, and the most important intergovernmental organization in the world, The United Nations, does not include the republic. This project will therefore investigate the extent of the scope of international relations the ROC is permitted to carry out as a *de facto* sovereign state in the current international setting. For its aforementioned importance, the United Nations will be used as the focal point of the analysis.

## **4. Analysis of the International Relations of the Republic of China**

### **4.1. Overview**

The United Nations, UN for short, established on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1945, immediately following the end of World War II, is an intergovernmental organization designed to promote international cooperation, protect human rights, and prevent violent conflict (UN). In that year, fighting the last of the civil war but still representing all of China, the ROC became one of the permanent members in the Security Council, along with the other four allied victors of the war: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the Soviet Union. For as long as it occupied this seat in the UN Security Council, the ROC enjoyed the privilege of being one of the five most powerful agents in the international setting. This period spanned from 1945 until 1971, when the UN members voted in favor of the PRC taking the seat in the Security Council reserved for China, effectively expelling the ROC from the top tier of the international setting (Meisler, 1995).

The period of time from 1945 until 1971 was characterized by the beginnings of the Cold War, during which the United States, arguably the most powerful and influential nation at the time, and its NATO<sup>2</sup> allies took on a policy of “containment” to prevent the spread of communism, spearheaded by the Soviet Union, to weaker developing nations (Gaddis, 2005). With the communist forces ruling in China after the ascent of the PRC to power, the United States naturally sided with the ROC, recognizing its sovereignty and maintaining diplomatic relations (United States Congress, 2011: 1). This period was also marked by a series of armed conflicts in the Taiwan Strait, known as the First and Second Taiwan Strait Crises. With the PRC gaining power in the international setting and the conflict between the two Chinese governments, the international interests of the United States began to shift. Although the ROC was voted out of the UN in 1971, it maintained official diplomatic relations with the United States until 1979 (United States Congress, 2011: 4).

Using 1971 as the turning point in Taiwanese international relations, the period after the ROC was excluded from the UN is characterized by a development of foreign diplomacy masked by economical and cultural interests. Taiwan developed a new form of foreign policy in order to maintain relations with other international players without needing formal recognition from those states. This period is marked by the severing of official diplomatic ties with many nations, but also with the establishment of non-governmental economic and cultural relations with those same nations.

After a transitional period, the ROC now holds non-governmental relations with many sovereign states and participates in a great number of international organizations and events in which the PRC also partakes. The analysis will follow the evolution to present the scope of international relations the ROC carries out today.

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<sup>2</sup> NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization), established in 1949, is a “political and military alliance to safeguard the freedom and security of its members,” which at the time included the USA, Canada, Iceland, the UK, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal (NATO).



## 4.2. The Republic of China in the United Nations

### 4.2.1. *The Republic of China in the Security Council*

When the Chinese communists won the civil war and established the PRC, the ROC continued to represent China in the international setting even after they retreated to Taiwan. As a permanent member in the Security Council, the ROC enjoyed the power of ratifying or vetoing all resolutions that concerned the UN, giving the republic great power in international affairs (Kirgis, 1995: 510). Although the Cold War setting made cooperation on most matters virtually impossible, as both the USA and the USSR also had the power of veto, the ROC partook in the passing of all resolutions during its time in the Security Council (except for the abstentions).

Among the list of resolutions the ROC participated in passing, one of the most notable was the demand for North Korea to cease its invasion of South Korea in 1950, which North Korea promptly ignored, forcing the council to issue a second resolution calling for the military assistance of South Korea in the Korean War. The ROC voted in favor of both resolutions (UN). The Soviet Union was absent during both proceedings, boycotting all affairs in protest of the presence of the ROC in the Security Council (Malkasian, 2001: 16). As the USSR was the first nation to recognize the sovereignty of the PRC in 1949, diplomatic relations with the ROC were nonexistent (Mackerras and Yorke, 1991: 146). In the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly of the UN in 1950, the Soviet Union proposed the removal of the ROC from the UN, intending to pass a resolution questioning the representation of China (UN). India, who had ended formal ties with the ROC to recognize the PRC in the same year, was in favor of this notion. The council dismissed the proposal, but it marked the beginning of international opposition to the Chinese representation by the ROC in international affairs.

To give a few more examples of the influence of the ROC during its time in the Security Council, in 1963 it voted in favor of the 180<sup>th</sup> resolution calling for Portugal to cease “all acts of repression” and withdraw “all military and other forces...employed for that purpose” in its African colonies, in order to recognize their right to self-determination (UN). In 1965, all members of the council unanimously voted in favor of ending hostilities between the two parties of the Indo-Pakistani War and to withdraw all armed forces from the area of conflict (UN). In 1969, the republic voted in favor of the 267<sup>th</sup> resolution, demanding that Israel rescind its

annexation of East Jerusalem by military conquest (UN). During its final full year representing China in the Security Council, the ROC voted in favor of the opposition to the apartheid in South Africa in 1970 (UN).

#### *4.2.2. Bilateral and Triangular Relations*

Outside of the international affairs concerning the United Nations, the ROC held the most important bilateral relations with the United States, crucial to its “survival” in the Asian Cold War scene. In the first week of 1950, disenchanted with the blatant corruption of the government of the ROC, the United States publicly stated that it would not come to the military defense of the republic in the event of an armed conflict (Matsumoto, 2012). However, when the Korean War broke out later in the year, the USA was faced with the need to “neutralize” the area and, in particular, the Taiwan Strait. With this, it also resumed “large-scale military and economic aid” to the ROC to counteract the influence of the communist mainland (Matsumoto, 2012).

Afterwards, the ROC engaged in a series of armed conflicts with the PRC as a follow-up to the unresolved tension of the civil war. The First Taiwan Strait Crisis began in 1954, after the newly elected President of the United States removed peacekeeping forces from the “neutralized” Taiwan Strait in favor of letting the ROC invade and “liberate” the communist mainland (Matsumoto, 2012). The ROC immediately relocated troops to their islands of Kinmen and Matsu, and the PRC responded by sending its army, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to begin shelling these islands (Matsumoto, 2012). This triggered the military crisis among the two Chinese governments and the United States, who was interested in maintaining peace in the area but also sought to contain the spread of communist influence by the PRC. The bombarding continued for a few days, but the effect lasted much longer. Earlier in the same year, the PRC had expressed the intention to “liberate Taiwan” and break the Taiwanese bilateral relations with the United States (Matsumoto, 2012).

This first crisis exposed the lack of commitment by the USA to defend the ROC, despite their claims to defend the island in case of an attack. When the PLA attacked Kinmen, the United States did not know how to respond: it considered that these offshore islands were not vital to the

defense of the Taiwanese island and that an actual intervention would provoke a war between the PRC and the USA, which in turn could incite a full-out war between the Soviet Union and the USA (Matsumoto, 2012). While the USA then carried out non-military strategies to diffuse the crisis, it was left with the dilemma of being active in the Taiwan Strait and risking the breakout of a war or remaining passive and risking the expansion of the Chinese communist influence in the East Asian region (Matsumoto, 2012). However, the crisis escalated in 1955 when the Formosa Resolution was passed by the US Congress, which gave the President permission to use military forces in aid of the ROC. The PRC eventually called for a ceasefire (Matsumoto, 2012).

The shelling resumed in 1958, when the PRC attacked Kinmen and Matsu a second time, marking the beginning of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. Again, the PLA threatened to invade and “liberate” the Taiwanese island (Global Security). The USA deployed armed forces to the region and aided the ROC in combat. The advanced armed conflict intensified, and when the threat of using nuclear weapons arose, the PRC backed down, calling for peace talks between the USA and the communist government (Global Security).

The first two Taiwan Strait Crises are important because they mark the start of modern triangular relations between the United States and the two Chinese governments, and they often bring into question the viability of the “One China” policy in the international setting. For example, it is important to mention that, during the first crisis, the USA approached the UN in an attempt to use the organization to bring an end to the Taiwan Strait conflict. The ROC, however, strongly opposed this involvement, fearing that a UN intervention could lead to the creation of “two Chinas” and consequently force the republic to acknowledge the *de jure* existence of the PRC (Matsumoto, 2012). Both Chinese governments were keen on firmly maintaining the “One China” policy until one managed to free the other. The end of the second crisis indicated a shift in the position of the USA regarding the matter, and diplomatic talks between the USA and the PRC commenced shortly after. The American bilateral relations with both Chinese governments further provoked the questioning of the “One China” concept, although the United States later maintained that the issue of Chinese sovereignty was not its affair and a situation of “status quo” was preferred, in which the ROC remained in the Taiwanese island and the PRC kept to the mainland (Matsumoto, 2012).

### *4.2.3. Resolution 2758 of the United Nations*

Returning to the context of the Cold War, the fracturing of relations between the USSR and the PRC, caused by ideological differences, gave the United States an opportunity to approach the Chinese government and seek a potential ally that could tilt the balance of the international order in its favor. The establishment of these relations, which was closer to becoming a reality with each passing day after the second crisis, meant risking the bilateral relations previously formed between the US and the ROC. This phenomenon, however, was not limited to the Americans, as many international players continued to acknowledge the sovereignty of the PRC.

In 1971, this shift was formalized in the United Nations, when two-thirds of the General Assembly members voted in favor the 2758<sup>th</sup> Resolution, which recognized the PRC as "the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations" and therefore ejected "the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations" (UN) Although the US voted against the motion and maintained relations with the ROC until 1979, it had already made its move to normalize relations with the PRC (Meisler, 1995). The UN resolution further solidified the influence of the "One China" policy beyond Chinese and Taiwanese borders, as the UN only contemplated the existence of one China. After this turning point in Taiwanese international relations, the ROC was left with no choice but to seek a different way to survive in the international system.

## **4.3. The People's Republic of China in the United Nations**

### *4.3.1. Shift in Recognition*

By the time the ROC was voted out of the UN in 1971, 66 nations had already cut ties with the republic and established formal relations with the PRC. Among these, most were of communist ideology or part of the Eastern Hemisphere, although some nations of the Western Block, such as France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Canada, had already recognized the sovereignty of the PRC before the switch of representation in the Security Council (Mackerras and Yorke, 1991: 151). After the passing of the 2758<sup>th</sup> resolution, the large majority of nations

which had not yet established official ties with the PRC gradually began to do so. At present, only 21 UN member states continue to recognize the sovereignty of the ROC, as well as the Holy See (Australian Government).

For Taiwanese international relations, ever since the retreat of the ROC to Taiwan in 1949, and more so after 1971, the international setting has been characterized by how other sovereign nations respond to the “One China” policy. Both Chinese governments insist that only one nation exists and both claim to have sovereignty over it. The reality, however, became increasingly obvious, as many sovereign states chose to recognize the PRC as “the sole legal government of all the Chinese people” and reaffirmed that “Taiwan is an inalienable part of its territory” (Mackerras and Yorke, 1991: 151). For international agents, the option of recognizing both governments was never available. For as long as the PRC continues to claim sovereignty over the Taiwanese island and the ROC over the mainland, the “One China” policy will persist.

It must be noted, however, that while the mainland has maintained their stance, the ROC has been forced to work around the concept of “One China” in order to continue participating in the international setting after 1971. On one hand, it has undertaken strategies such as “dollar diplomacy” and “covert diplomacy” to survive as an international player and maintain some mutual recognition with other sovereign states. On the other hand, in recent years and in light of all the obstacles to normalized international relations, the ROC has even begun to question the “One China” policy itself.

#### *4.3.2. New Taiwanese Foreign Diplomacy*

The basic notion of “dollar diplomacy” is to financially aid a more economically fragile nation with the purpose of achieving “broader strategic foreign policy goals” (Olsen, 2009). It was first employed by the USA at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and later adopted by the two Chinese governments in order to gain more international recognition than the other (Olsen, 2009). For the ROC, this has been a lost cause, as the investments of the PRC in this “dollar diplomacy” rivalry have been far greater. In 1997, the Bahamas cut ties with the ROC in favor of the mainland when the PRC invested 175 million US dollars to the construction of a shipment facility in one of their port cities (Olsen, 2009). In a similar fashion, Costa Rica, a long-time

supporter of the ROC, recognized the sovereignty of the PRC after economical aid in 2007 (Olsen, 2009). However, still to this day, the “dollar diplomacy” has gained the Taiwanese government mutual recognition from a number of sovereign states. Among these, Nicaragua and Saint Lucia should be noted for having cut official ties with the ROC only to resume them after further developments of its “dollar diplomacy.”

“Covert diplomacy” refers to strategies the ROC employs to carry out international bilateral relations with nations that do not recognize its sovereignty in a covertly official manner. These relations are usually labeled as being of economical and cultural nature, although they serve as a cover-up of seemingly diplomatic and political functions. For example, the ROC has more than 50 so-called Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Offices around the world, in nations such as the USA and Spain which officially recognize the PRC<sup>3</sup>. These offices are an unofficial alternative to embassies or consulates in countries which do not recognize the sovereignty of the ROC, as they are in charge of functions normally assigned to official embassies, such as processing visas.

Another example of a new strategy to survive in the international setting is the creation of the name “Chinese Taipei” in 1979, with which the PRC allows the ROC to participate in various international organizations and events that the mainland also partakes in (Lin, 2008). These events include the Olympics, Paralympics, the FIFA World Cup, and Miss Universe, among others. The name is inclusive and ambiguous, but very much in line with the “One China” policy.

#### *4.3.3. Deterioration of the “One China” Concept*

The visible tangent from the “One China” concept was initiated by the ROC, particularly during the presidency of Li Deng-hui. Following a visit to his alma matter, Cornell University, in the USA in 1995, during which Li spoke about “the Taiwan Experience” of democratization (Cornell University, 2012), the PRC conducted six nuclear missile tests less than 60 kilometers off the Taiwanese coast. Perceiving the Taiwanese diplomatic isolation as a threat to the “One

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<sup>3</sup> See Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the U.S. website <http://www.roc-taiwan.org/us/mp.asp?mp=12> and Oficina Economica y Cultural de Taipei website <http://www.taiwanembassy.org/ES/mp.asp?mp=137>

China” policy, the PRC mobilized PLA forces in the Fujian province and announced more nuclear testing at provokingly close distances to main Taiwanese port cities (Global Security). This sparked the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, which ended with the largest American involvement to date. In line with the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, which “proclaimed American support for the peaceful reunification of Taiwan and the mainland, and committed the United States to help Taiwan defend itself in case of Chinese aggression,” the USA sent various fleets to the Taiwan Strait, emphasizing their commitment to a peaceful region (Global Security). The crisis was counterproductive to the PRC, as it only served to anger the Taiwanese population, which reelected Li in the democratic elections held in the following year.

The three Taiwan Strait crises characterize the triangular relations between the two Chinese governments and the USA over the span of the Cold War and in the years that followed it. While the USA does not diplomatically recognize the ROC, it recognizes that it is an important international agent in the world. Even after establishing bilateral relations with the PRC and cutting official ties with the Taiwanese, the American dedication to the defense of the island has not waned. In other areas, the USA has also shown its support for Taiwanese politics: it congratulated the ROC as “beacon of democracy” after the political party shift in the 2008 elections (United States Congress, 2011). Following the crises in the Taiwan Strait, the ROC has also become a “major recipient” of USA arm sales (United States Congress, 2011). However, it must be noted that the international relations between the USA and the ROC have been kept to a strictly unofficial manner in order to not complicate ties with the PRC. For example, in The World Factbook, a database run by the American CIA, Taiwan is presented as an ambiguous autonomous region under the name of “Taiwan,” but the official or long name for the region is listed as “none,” and “Republic of China” is nowhere to be found (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015).

The PRC has also kept a close eye on the nations that establish official diplomatic relations with the ROC, especially if they are states that also recognize the PRC and, therefore, “violate” the “One China” policy. The PRC first established diplomatic relations with the Republic of Kiribati in 1980 and later in 2003 with the ROC (Norris, 2004). On its part, the Taiwanese government did not request for Kiribati to break ties with the PRC and was not opposed to the simultaneous recognition of both Chinese nations (Norris, 2004). The island nation carried out official diplomatic ties with both governments for a short period of time, but

the Taiwanese stance on the “One China” policy greatly angered the mainland. The PRC eventually cut ties with the Republic of Kiribati, but the relevance of the issue lies in the change of the Taiwanese stance.

Another example of this change in stance has been the series of attempts made by the ROC to rejoin the UN since 1993, not as the representative of China, but representing the government of Taiwan. The ROC has used the “established model of parallel representation of divided countries at the United Nations” as well as a campaign to formalizing the sovereignty of its state next to the PRC in an attempt to regain entrance to the UN (Winkler, 2012). The argument created during the presidency of the DPP was that the 2758<sup>th</sup> resolution which expelled the ROC from the UN solely settled the issue of which government should take the Chinese seat in the organization, and it did not address whether an additional seat should be made to represent the Taiwanese population of well over 23 million (Winkler, 2012). However, all attempts at a reentry have been blocked by the PRC with firm opposition and intention of veto, as well as the other members of the Security Council which do not recognize the ROC. In the 2007 attempt to rejoin, the UN rejected the bid of the ROC to enter the UN “under the name of Taiwan,” citing its adherence to the “One China” policy in the 2758<sup>th</sup> resolution (BBC, 2007). However, the aforementioned resolution does not specifically mention Taiwan or its sovereignty (UN).

On a popular level, the fact that citizens of the ROC have their own passport also makes many doubt the validity of the “One China” concept today and question how the republic can issue its own passport without being a sovereign state. The ROC passport is as valid internationally as the PRC passport, and the sole nation that does not accept or recognize it is the PRC itself. Only 5 other nations, as well as Macau and Hong Kong, accept the passport but do not issue visas or tourist passes on it (Immigration Department). The United Nations, which does not recognize the sovereignty of the ROC, does not accept the ROC passport as legitimate identification for tourist visits on its grounds.

## **5. Hypothesis on the Future**

Based on the social and political evolution presented in the history and analysis sections of the project, various hypotheses can be made regarding the future of Taiwanese international



relations. Even if change comes about in the future, it is impossible to predict when a transformation in the foreign diplomacy of the Republic of China will formalize. Furthermore, the delicate position of the Taiwanese nation in the international setting makes change seem very distant. All previous attempts by the ROC to break the “One China” policy internationally have either been blocked or criticized by the PRC and, in a number of cases, such as the Taiwan Strait conflicts, violence and threats of nuclear warfare have been employed. While the ROC has maintained a policy of “One China, Two Interpretations,” the PRC has chosen to stand by “One China, Two Systems,” setting apart the stance of each respective nation. For this reason, the main hypothesis of the project is that this “status quo” of ambiguous sovereignty given to the ROC in the international setting by the PRC will continue for an undetermined period of time, presumably a long one. For as long as the Taiwanese island does not push for formal independence from the mainland, the PRC will not press the topic of reunification and will keep ties across the Taiwan Strait as they are at present.

However, a shift in the approach of Taiwanese international relations is a very likely development over time. The evolution in Taiwanese politics and the democratization of the government have evidenced the shift of ideologies, especially those which have started to distance themselves from the “One China” concept and have gone as far as requesting formal independence for the Taiwanese nation. The new generations of Taiwanese are individuals which have been born on the island and disconnected almost entirely from the complex identity debate of the first KMT supporters on the island, as the period of Japanese colonization and civil war is further behind them with every passing day. The separatist claim is gaining momentum and the concepts of reunification with the mainland and “One China” gradually make less sense. If a change is to take place, separation is much more likely, while reunification seems virtually impossible.

The future of Taiwanese international relations will be determined by how the international setting allows the ROC to exist in it. The most necessary change would be for nations to support the idea of recognizing both the PRC *and* the ROC, so that the Taiwanese nation could reestablish normalized foreign diplomacy with other sovereign states. However, for this to happen, the PRC would have to be the first state to approve the notion and formally recognize independence. For as long as the PRC insists that only one Chinese republic can be recognized

and that the entirety of the territory is under its control (with Taiwan as an inalienable part), the ROC will not gain any more recognition or freedom in the international setting.

Naturally, it must also be mentioned that the topic of Taiwanese independence and the complete breakaway from the “One China” policy would have to be conceived in the Taiwanese society, and the current debate over the true identity of the Taiwanese is a very delicate and complex one.

## 6. Conclusion

Concluding the research and the analysis of Taiwanese international relations over time, the author wonders until what point the “One China” policy can continue to exist in the international setting. For how long can the Republic of China, a nation with *de facto* sovereignty, agree to exist in the international setting without normalized international relations? The author is led to believe that change may take a long time to occur, but feels it is inevitable for the Taiwanese society to aspire to more international recognition and normalized foreign policy.

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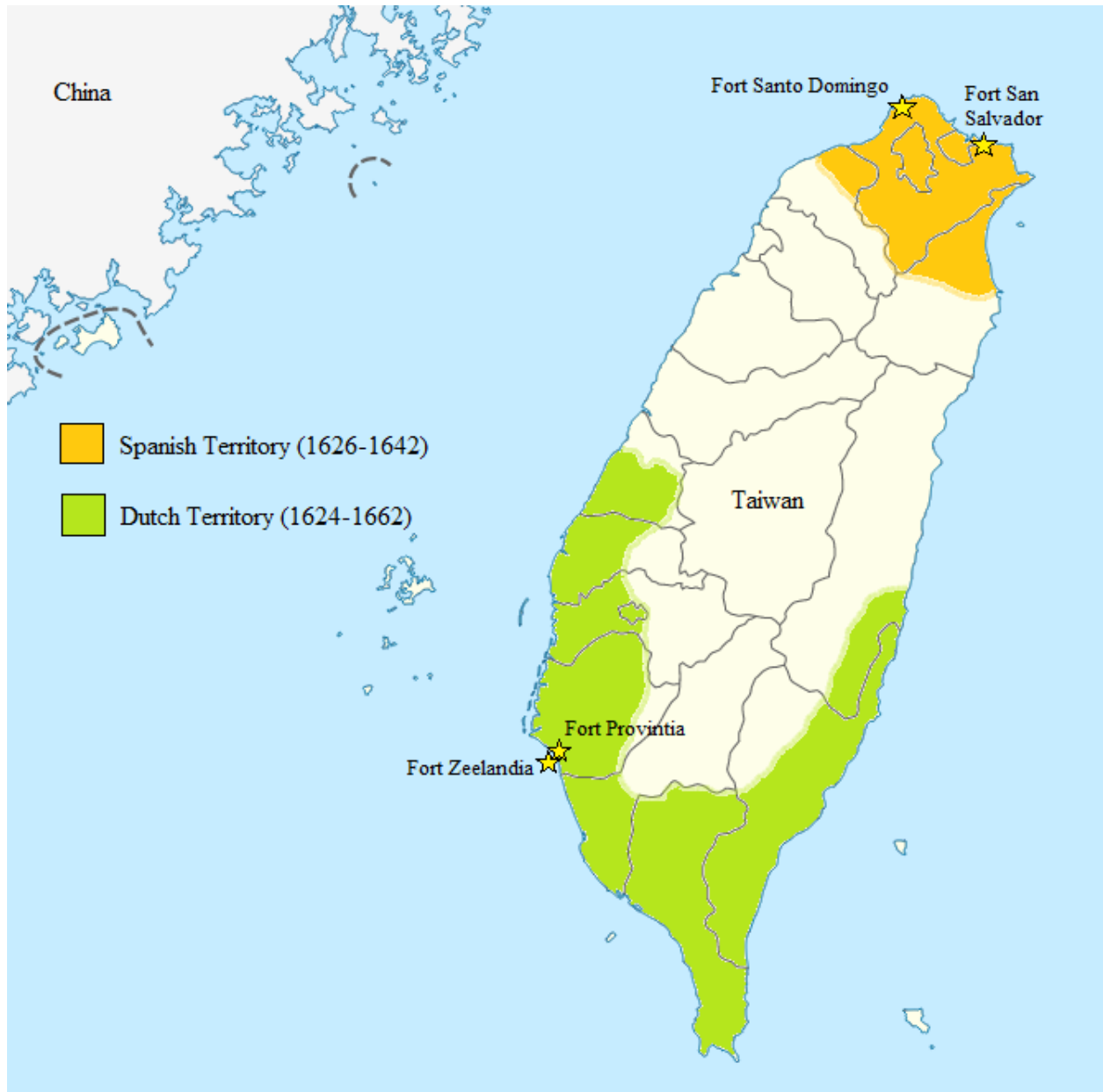
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## 8. Appendices

Figure A.



Map of Taiwan during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, depicting the Dutch and Spanish colonies and their main respective forts.

Figure B.



Map of Taiwan, the Taiwan Strait, the Chinese Fujian Province, and Taiwanese islets.

Figure C.

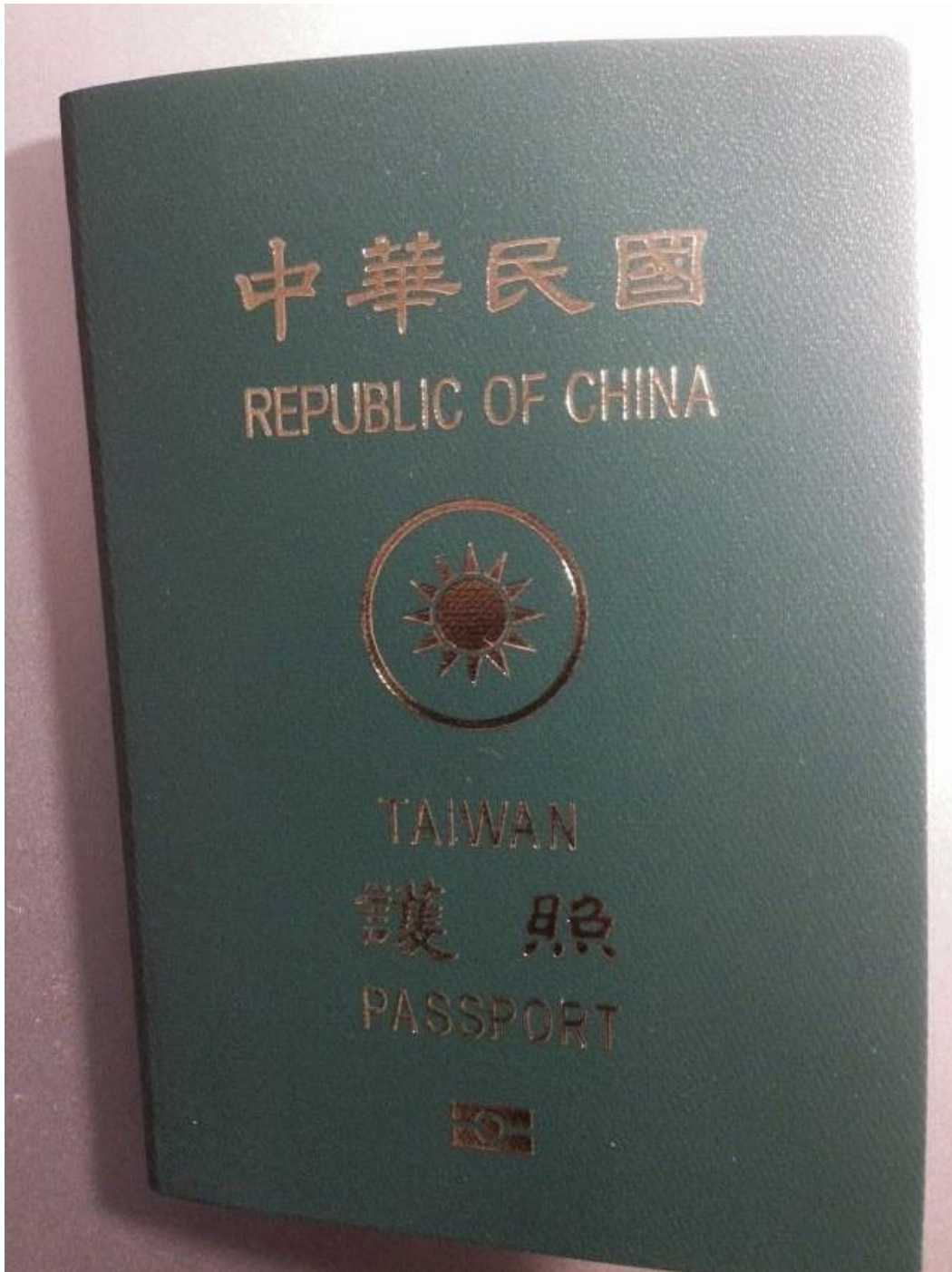


Photo of a Taiwanese passport.