

# Why Taiwan is a major source of tension for China and the U.S.

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Disputed map of China, including Taiwan

Hailey Brown - Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949, but its territory is still claimed by the People's Republic of China (PRC). The United States operates under a 'One China' policy, under which Taiwan is seen as part of China. However, recent foreign policy appears to have shifted away from this rhetoric. Top U.S. leaders have paid visits to the island, spoken about its sovereignty in gray terms, and, most recently, [completed a \\$440 million military equipment sale to Taiwan](#). The sale prompted an unhappy response from Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Col. Tan Kefei.

**Territory** is a central aspect of geopolitics, as it defines the extent of the people and areas a state or entity has control over. Deterritorialization occurs when an established territorial entity, often a state, breaks up or joins with a new entity. During the Chinese Civil War, in 1949, the Government of the Republic of China (ROC), shifted to Taiwan, where it established independent governance. Currently, Mainland China or the PRC is governed under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). As of 1971, the PRC has been viewed as the sole international representative of China. However, the ROC has become more active internationally in recent years, attending assemblies and signing trade agreements. Despite this, the PRC has continued to claim Taiwan as part of its territory, leading to clashes with the U.S. over its involvement with the Taiwanese government. Beijing

has conducted numerous military drills in the area, which increase at times when the U.S. has visited or conducted meetings with Taiwanese government officials. Taiwan is an example of how territory is not solid or unchanging, it is dynamic and contested.

U.S. diplomatic relations with the Taiwanese government are unofficial, claiming cultural and commercial ties. However, it also operates on a policy of strategic ambiguity, meaning it maintains the ability to come to Taiwan's defense, but does not do so. However, the Biden Administration has communicated stronger intentions to defend its independence from China, a possible change in the country's [geopolitical code](#). Whether or not this is the smartest or safest decision is unclear, as it has the potential to continue to alienate China as an ally. The two countries' relations have already weakened. Beijing's use of increased military drills and statements in opposition to U.S. military equipment sales to Taiwan are a calculation in its respective geopolitical code.

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