An Assessment of Taiwan-Africa Relations since The 1960

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Abstract

Taiwan-Africa relations like many others, date back to time in the distant past, specifically from the early 1960s. During that time, Taiwan had established diplomatic connections with more than thirteen African States. These relations grew over time and possessed signs of future growth, not until the victory of the Chinese Communist Party, which led to the emergence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole and recognized government of the Republic. Thus, the charting of the "One China" principle coupled with the economic revolution of the Chinese State, increased China's influence across the globe, while also impeding on the status of Taiwan. This study, thus, is an investigation of the Taiwan-Africa relations. The study made use of the secondary and multidisciplinary approaches in the collation and subsequent analysis of the required data. It revealed that prior to this time, Taiwan had a working diplomatic relations with the peoples of Africa, but trends were such that hampered these interactions. The study further showed that apart from Somaliland, Eswatini and maybe South Africa, Taiwan's influence on the continent has waned significantly. It revealed that the "One China" principle and the application of "dollar diplomacy" aided China in

gaining a grip of Africa. The study, however, listed technology transfer, economic development, education and scholarship, and provision of aid as some of the impacts of Taiwan-Africa relations. It concluded that although diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Africa date back to times in the past, Taiwan will need to utilize innovative strategies to enhance its remaining connections in the region.

Keynotes: Taiwan-Africa, China, Influence, Diplomatic Relations

Introduction

Diplomatic relations between Taiwan and mainland China began in 1949 after the Communists displaced the Nationalists from mainland China during the Chinese Civil War. Previously, Taiwan had established formal diplomatic relations with thirty African nations, however, Taiwan's political power as compared to the early 1960s, have experienced a notable decline as its primary emphasis has shifted towards economic pursuits. Taiwan's competitive edge in the twenty-first century diminished compared to China as a result of China's ongoing economic expansion. Moreover, China's substantial investments in commerce and development granted it a significant level of influence, thanks to its strong economic strength.

Consequently, several African governments that have developed diplomatic connections with China, took notice of this occurrence. Thus, Taiwan is only formally acknowledged by only one African nation, Eswatini (formerly referred to as Swaziland). In the modern period, Taiwan faces a significant challenge in its diplomatic engagements with China in Africa, which necessitates the exploration of different approaches to achieve legitimacy (Kironska, 2022). Although there have been no changes in official diplomatic connections since a diplomatic truce between Taiwan and China in 2008, significant inquiries persist over Taiwan's relations throughout Africa. In light of the above, this study examined Taiwan-Africa relations as well as discusses the dilemma facing the Republic of China (Taiwan) in their interaction with the global community. Additionally, the study examined the impacts of these connections on Africa.

Statement of the problem

Since the triumph of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, which facilitated the consolidation of China, Taiwan has had significant challenges in its interactions with the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite Taiwan's self-perception as a sovereign state, the "One-China" policy and the lack of recognition from many states worldwide have presented substantial challenges for the little island nation. The global preference for China over Taiwan, thus, necessitates further examination in order to get insight into the reasons behind governments' greater receptiveness towards China compared to Taiwan. This study, therefore, aim to examine the relationship between Taiwan and Africa since the 1960, as well as evaluate its impact, and propose potential solutions.

Methodology

To collect information for a specific study, historical research utilizes a variety of sources, including primary, secondary, and multidisciplinary sources. The primary source comprises verbal accounts that are transmitted as a record of an event. It may be provided by a non-witness or an eyewitness. Conversely, secondary sources consist of documented information, such as that found in textbooks, mass media, archives, and so forth. Thus, for this study, the researcher utilized secondary and multidisciplinary sources. This became imperative in order to provide the researcher with a wealth of data and facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter being discussed.

The “One-China” Policy and the Taiwanese Dilemma

The Taiwan Dilemma is a complex web that remains unresolved despite the UN Resolution and the loss of recognition from key states by the ROC. These resolutions not only define Taiwan but have provided clarification about the legitimacy of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the governing body of China. However, they have also introduced ambiguity regarding the inclusion of Taiwan within the "China" that the PRC purports to represent. The Taiwan Dilemma is intricately connected to the one-China policy, both in reality and in legal terms. As per Beijing's “One-China” policy, the People's Republic of China assumed the role as the exclusive government of China, succeeding the Republic of China (Crawford, 2006). In essence, the ROC has disintegrated and Taiwan has become

a constituent of the PRC. Taiwan is considered a rebellious province under the control of unlawful forces and without any international legal status.

Since its establishment in 1912, the ROC has consistently maintained its status as a sovereign state. The statehood of the Republic of China (ROC) was not terminated by either the Japanese occupation or the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In accordance with the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, the ROC has continually satisfied the requirements for statehood. These requirements include having a permanent population, a clearly defined territory, and a functioning government that has the ability to engage in international relations. The parameters of the Republic of China (Taiwan) may have undergone changes over time, although they have remained constant. Regarding the final capacity criterion, one could posit that Taiwan's limited diplomatic contacts contribute to a deficiency in its capacity. However, this reasoning is invalid as the diplomatic impediment faced by the ROC is a result of the PRC's influence on foreign governments, which has limited the ROC's ability to engage in foreign affairs (Elias, 2004). Furthermore, it might be argued that the presence of statehood criteria outlined in the Montevideo Convention is inconsequential in the context of Taiwan, as its lack of a genuine claim to statehood prevents it from being classified as a state. This position fails to acknowledge the nuanced distinction between the two territorial notions, namely Taiwan and the Republic of China (ROC). The de facto jurisdiction of the Republic of China (ROC) is limited to Taiwan, resulting in a significant convergence of these two political conceptions within the realms of international law and political rhetoric. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that, from a strict legal standpoint, the province of Taiwan is a constituent of the Republic of China (ROC), which has consistently maintained its status as a sovereign state.

Furthermore, according to Green (1972), international states have consistently rejected Beijing's one-China stance, which asserts that Taiwan is a constituent of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Although international nations acknowledge the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate government of China, they generally hold a different opinion regarding the PRC's territorial assertion over Taiwan. Hence, in their separate joint communiqué with the People's Republic of China (PRC), the United States and the United Kingdom

express their recognition, Canada acknowledges, and Japan comprehends and demonstrates respect for the PRC's stance regarding Taiwan's inclusion inside China. These meticulously selected wording, employed in lieu of the term "recognize," along with the historical context of negotiations, directly contradict the PRC's assertion of a "international consensus" that Taiwan is an inherent and indivisible component of China. Ultimately, the stances of these foreign nations also suggest that the Republic of China's loss of recognition does not nullify its status as a sovereign state. Furthermore, their positions align with the declaratory theory. According to the dominant perspective on recognition, diplomatic recognition serves as a means of acknowledging a state, and it is said that no state has the authority to independently determine the competence of other states. Therefore, the existence of the ROC is an undeniable reality; its status as a state is not compromised by its absence of worldwide acknowledgment. Put simply, acknowledging the assertion that the ROC forfeited its status as a nation due to the loss of the UN seat or recognition necessarily results in an ironic inference that the PRC did not officially establish itself as a state until the 1970s.

Taiwan-Africa Relations Since the 1960

Before World War II, the Republic of China (ROC), or Taiwan, ruled over the mainland, resulting in limited diplomatic connections between China and many African countries. Their development began with the end of China's civil war, the victory of the Chinese Communist Party, and the Kuomintang's retreat to Taiwan, along with the Republic of China's institutions (Basiru, 2022). According to Mao Zedong, in Rich and Banerjee (2015), the newly established People's Republic of China (PRC) quickly acknowledged independent African nations as important allies in its fight against imperialism. In the Taiwan Strait, the Republic of China (ROC)-Taiwan, worked to maintain its position as the only rightful government of China, in order to protect Africa from the influence of Communism (Tseng, 2008). After several African nations gained independence in the 1960s, the Republic of China (ROC) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) worked on building friendly relations. Tseng (2008) stated that Taipei efficiently sent diplomatic delegations to honour independence events in 1960. By 1963, Taiwan (ROC) had effectively formed diplomatic relationships with 13 states, while China (PRC) had only been able to secure ties a handful of states (Rich & Banerjee, 2015).

Nevertheless, the diplomatic stronghold that Taiwan had previously built was greatly undermined in the 1970s. The transition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic of China at the United Nations in 1971 had a notable influence. Over the course of the decade, the People's Republic of China (PRC) gained diplomatic recognition from nearly 40 African states (Tseng, 2008). Following the United States' decision in 1979, Taiwan ended up with just five allies in the region. The declining trend was further reinforced during the 1980s. Over time, Taiwan's pursuit of diplomatic recognition evolved, shifting from asserting its status as the sole legitimate government of China to emphasizing the preservation of de facto independence, which faced threats (Rich & Banerjee, 2015). The late 1980s and the end of the Cold War marked important milestones. According to Rich and Banerjee (2015), the choice to acknowledge either the People's Republic of China (PRC) or the Republic of China (ROC) was impacted by a transition from ideological considerations to practical and economic factors. China's rapid economic expansion had established it as a major player in terms of economic influence. Nevertheless, Taiwan was able to offset some of the negative trends seen in the past two decades by adopting Lee Teng-hui's practical approach to foreign relations. As a result, the Republic of China (ROC) started using the concept of 'democracy' as a unique feature and encouraged cooperation (Tseng, 2008) with both new allies and those it didn't have diplomatic relations with. Chen Shui-bian's inauguration as president in 2000 established a consensus among various political parties on the matter. Yet, these successes did not lead to a lasting return to the African diplomatic stage for Taiwan.

The African summits organized by China and Taiwan in 2006 and 2007, respectively, showed a significant difference. According to Kaburu and Kabia (2022), 48 African representatives participated in the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in China, while only five attended the summit in Taipei. The dominance of economic factors in African nations sparked a period of fierce competition between Taiwan and China, often referred to as "dollar diplomacy". Both nations actively sought support, investment, and loans from African countries. The advantages provided by these strategies to African nations and their ruling class, along with changing political leadership, led to many countries altering their recognition status multiple times. Ma Ying-Jeou's election in 2008, with his conservative views, resulted in a de facto "diplomatic truce" that deterred

African countries from using recognition as a bargaining tool. Several states, including Gambia, tried to establish connections with China, but their efforts were ignored or rejected. During the period from 2008 to 2016, there was a noticeable absence of diplomatic recognition transfers between countries. The reelection of Tsai Ing-wen, a candidate from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), in 2016 led to a deterioration in cross-strait relations. Moreover, China significantly increased its economic presence in Africa throughout the 2000s.

Factors that promote Taiwan-Africa Relations

There are several factors responsible for fostering Taiwan-Africa relations and they include, but not limited to the following:

Economic Cooperation

Taiwan has actively participated in economic collaboration with several African nations, providing technical support, investments, and humanitarian assistance. The enhancement of economic connections has shown to be a reciprocal advantage and a pivotal element in cultivating the relationship between Africa and Taiwan. Collaborative economic initiatives have facilitated reciprocal economic expansion, trade alliances, investments, and joint ventures, so generating economic advantages for both Taiwan and African nations, thereby cultivating a sense of dependency.

Cultural Exchanges

Cultural contacts have also played a significant role in fostering connections between Taiwan and Africa. Facilitating cultural and educational exchanges have fostered reciprocal comprehension and interpersonal bonds. Social exchanges have also played a vital role in fostering direct interactions between individuals hailing from Taiwan and Africa. The process of being exposed to diverse cultures, traditions, and ways of life, therefore, facilitates the development of mutual understanding and cultivates a collective sense of humanity. Moreover, exchange programs foster enduring ties among individuals by cultivating personal interactions. Consequently, this aids in dispelling misconceptions and fostering a more sophisticated and favorable understanding of Africa-Taiwan relations.

Trade and Investments

The facilitation and promotion of investment and commerce between Taiwan and African states have played a significant role in fostering economic progress between both groups. This economic expansion consequently, have resulted in enhanced living standards and increased affluence, thereby fostering a favorable atmosphere for bilateral relations. Also, investments in several industries, including manufacturing, technology, and agriculture, have contributed to the generation of employment opportunities. This not only tackles the problem of unemployment but have also contributed to the enhancement of human capital. The diversification of economies through trade and investment has proven advantageous for both Taiwan and African nations. By diversifying their investments, they reduce their susceptibility to economic shocks in certain industries and enhance overall stability/cooperation.

Shared Interest

Taiwan and African countries actively participate in international forums to engage in multilateral deliberations regarding common issues and possibilities, which facilitates the development of a more comprehensive understanding of one another's viewpoints and worries, thus, establishing a foundation for cooperation. In international forums, nations frequently collaborate in pursuit of shared objectives, such as the mitigation of climate change, the advancement of sustainable development, or the safeguarding of global health security. The establishment of shared values and aims between Taiwan and African nations serves as a fundamental basis for fostering collaboration and partnership. This facilitates the harmonization of their policies about diverse global matters. It also has the potential to transcend the confines of the specific forum deliberations and encompass wider diplomatic endeavors, thus fostering a more unified and harmonized approach. International conferences facilitate the sharing of knowledge and optimal methods. Taiwan, renowned for its notable technological progress and achievements in development, possesses the potential to impart its experiences and expertise to African nations, so facilitating developments in technology, economy, and society.

Impact of Taiwan-Africa Relations

Although relations between Taiwan and African States have waned significantly since the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the "One-China Policy," it still maintains a meager impact on the continent. These are examined below:

Fostering Overseas Relations

Taiwan has encountered difficulties in obtaining diplomatic acknowledgment as a result of the One-China policy, which affirms the existence of a singular China and Taiwan's inclusion within it. In recent decades, a number of African nations have transitioned their diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing. Nevertheless, Taiwan has achieved a notable milestone in Africa through the progression of its diplomatic ties with some African States, namely, Somaliland and Eswatini. Although Somaliland is seen as a constituent of Somalia's territory, it has actively interacted with both Taiwan and China during the latter part of the 2000s (Laurier, 2022). Nevertheless, Somaliland endeavored to enhance its association with Taiwan in 2019, disregarding China, ultimately resulting in the 2020 accord that established representative offices in both regions. Subsequently, a period of abundant collaboration ensued, shown by the Taiwan Expo (2021) hosted in Hargeisa, as well as the establishment of accords pertaining to energy and mineral resources, healthcare aid, and the current deployment of alternative military personnel (Strong, 2022).

Economic Development

Taiwan has actively engaged in economic collaboration with a few African countries, namely in the domains of technology, agriculture, and infrastructural advancement. As of 2022, the total value of Taiwanese investments in African countries between 2012-2022 was estimated to be around $55.7 million (Statista, 2023). The enhancement of economic relations between Taiwan and African nations, thus, has yielded mutual advantages through the facilitation of commerce, investments, and technology interchanges. For instance, South Africa continues to be Taiwan's primary ally in Africa. According to the Taipei Liaison Office, there are approximately 800 Taiwanese factories and firms located in South Africa as of 2017. Taiwanese enterprises, thus, contribute over 40,000 local jobs and generate a total direct investment of around $1.69 billion annually.

Aid

The foreign aid strategy of Taiwan mostly originates from its state of international isolation, which is enforced by China. According to Atkinson (2017), Taiwan provides aid to nations in Africa, the Americas, and the South Pacific without imposing stringent accountability criteria. This approach is intended to maintain official diplomatic ties, even in the face of opposition from China. Taiwan has demonstrated strong engagement in development assistance endeavors in Africa, providing various supportive measures across many sectors like healthcare, education, and agriculture. These initiatives make a substantial contribution to the socio-economic progress of the nations involved.

Technology Transfer

Given Taiwan's status as a leading hub for technology and innovation, it has the opportunity to participate in information-sharing and collaborative endeavors with African countries to improve their technological capabilities. This phenomenon has resulted in positive outcomes for the promotion of economic growth and creativity throughout the African continent.

Education and Scholarship

Taiwan has provided scholarships and educational prospects to students from Africa. The objective of this initiative is to facilitate the development of human capital and encourage cultural interchange between Taiwan and African nations. African students have been afforded the opportunity to pursue tertiary education in Taiwan. According to Lin (2020), in 2020, Taiwan and many African countries (Eswatini, South Africa, Egypt, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Nigeria) inked a four-year plan with a budget of $16.69 million. This plan included the establishment of a coalition of local institutions and universities. According to data from Taiwan's Ministry, approximately 1,399 African students were studying in Taiwan, accounting for approximately 1.07 percent of total international students. The purpose of this educational cooperation is to foster and advance the development of human capital.

Conclusion

Although diplomatic relations between Taiwan and Africa dates back to the 90s, the emergence and the growth of the People’s Republic of China has limited

significantly, Taiwan's diplomatic contact with the rest of the world. However, despite Taiwan's ongoing and expanding diplomatic engagements with few countries in Latin America and Africa, the trajectory of these relations remains uncertain. However, Taiwan persists in maintaining these links, particularly with its two last allies (Somaliland and Eswatini) in Africa. Due to this circumstance, it is likely that Taiwan will need to utilize innovative strategies to enhance these connections, which hold significant importance. The utilization of subnational diplomacy, which has demonstrated its efficacy in Taiwan's engagement with the United States, is closely intertwined with Taiwan's pursuit of advancing its own "model of cooperation" with the rest of the world.

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