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The South China Sea Crisis and Taiwan Earthquake

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Model UN Background Guide: The South China Sea Crisis and Taiwan Earthquake

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1. Introduction

The South China Sea has long been a region of tension due to territorial disputes, especially between China, Taiwan, and other nations. While it's a major international shipping route, it is also home to vital natural resources. Recently, a major earthquake has left Taiwan devastated, leading to fears of foreign intervention. In this scenario, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has landed on Taiwan's shores, claiming to provide humanitarian aid, but some believe there may be ulterior motives for their actions. As representatives of China, Taiwan, the United States, and other Southeast Asian countries, as well as NGO leaders and private company executives, you will be tasked with navigating this situation to prevent further escalation or potential war.

2. History of the South China Sea Disputes

The South China Sea is a heavily contested area with overlapping territorial claims, primarily from China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Vietnam.

- **China's Position:** The People's Republic of China (PRC) claims nearly the entire South China Sea, based on a historical map known as the "Nine-Dash Line." This line stretches far beyond China's internationally recognized borders and overlaps with territories claimed by other nations, especially Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam.
- **Taiwan's Position:** Taiwan (officially the Republic of China, or ROC) has its own claims over the South China Sea, especially since it is the official government that controlled mainland China before the communist victory in 1949. Taiwan has control over some of the islands in the region, including the Pratas Islands, and views itself as the rightful government of all of China.
- **The United States' Position:** The U.S. does not claim any territory in the South China Sea but is a strong supporter of freedom of navigation and international law. The U.S. has repeatedly expressed concerns about China's militarization of artificial islands and its

aggressive actions in the region. The U.S. also has strategic alliances with Taiwan and conducts military operations in the area to ensure regional stability.

3. The Taiwan Earthquake

A 7.2 strikes Taiwan, causing widespread devastation. Thousands of people are killed or injured, and critical infrastructure has been severely damaged. Taiwan's government is vulnerable and struggling to respond to the crisis, and the international community has offered assistance.

- **China's Response:** In the wake of the earthquake, the PRC offers to send military and civilian personnel to Taiwan to assist with rescue and rebuilding efforts. While China frames this as a humanitarian gesture, many view it with suspicion. Given the tense relationship between China and Taiwan, there are concerns that this could be a covert attempt to assert control over Taiwan, under the guise of aid.
- **Taiwan's Response:** Taiwan sees this offer as a threat. Taiwan has long been a self-governing entity, but the PRC has made it clear that it wishes to reunite Taiwan with mainland China. Taiwan fears that this “aid” could be a Trojan horse for a Chinese military occupation or further undermining its sovereignty. Although Taiwan is skeptical of China's humanitarian aid, they are also in desperate need of it, and hope that the United States or an International body will step up instead.
- **The United States' Response:** The United States is deeply concerned about China's actions in Taiwan. The U.S. has a long-standing commitment to Taiwan's defense through the Taiwan Relations Act, which encourages support for Taiwan's security. While the U.S. is wary of China's increasing military presence, it also recognizes the need for international cooperation to aid Taiwan's recovery after the earthquake. If China were to attack the United States would have to carefully weigh their options and decide if they wanted to get their military involved, explore diplomatic solutions or leave Taiwan to fend for itself.

4. Current Situation

After the earthquake, PRC forces have landed in Taiwan's major ports, with official statements from China claiming their presence is purely to assist with reconstruction. However, Taiwan has

rejected this offer, viewing it as an infringement on its sovereignty. Meanwhile, the United States has been increasing its military presence in the region, conducting joint military exercises with Taiwan and allies like Japan. There are fears that this situation could quickly escalate into military conflict, especially if China sees the U.S. involvement as an act of aggression.

5. Possible Solutions and Actions

As representatives in the Model UN, you are tasked with coming up with possible solutions to de-escalate the crisis and avoid conflict. Some potential options include:

- **International Humanitarian Aid:** Organize a neutral international coalition to provide humanitarian aid to Taiwan, ensuring that no single nation has the opportunity to gain military control under the guise of aid.
- **Diplomatic Negotiations:** Encourage dialogue between China and Taiwan, potentially mediated by international bodies like the United Nations or other neutral parties. The goal would be to address Taiwan's security concerns while ensuring that the rebuilding efforts can proceed smoothly.
- **Military Deterrence:** The United States could increase its military presence to act as a deterrent against any Chinese military escalation. However, this comes with the risk of triggering a direct military confrontation.
- **Regional Cooperation:** Involve neighboring countries and regional organizations such as ASEAN to help mediate the situation and ensure that the interests of all parties are represented, reducing the chance of unilateral action by any one country.

7. Conclusion

The situation in the South China Sea is complex, with historical tensions, strategic interests, and national sovereignty all playing critical roles. As delegates representing China, Taiwan, or the United States, you must find a way to navigate these competing interests while working toward peace and stability in the region. The fate of Taiwan, and potentially the broader Asia-Pacific region, rests on your ability to collaborate and negotiate during this critical time.

Positions

Lin Chia-Lung, Foreign Minister, *Taiwan*

Wang Yi, Foreign Minister, *China*

Bùi Thanh Sơn, Foreign Minister, *Vietnam*

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, Foreign Minister, *Brunei*

Mohamad Hasan, Foreign Minister, *Malaysia*

Enrique Manalo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, *Philippines*

Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, *US*

Rafaela David, Leader of environmental-activism NGO Atin Ito, *Philippines*

Gina Lopez, environmental activist and former Environmental Minister, *Philippines*

Dr. Wei-Ta Pan, director of Taiwanese Red Cross, *Taiwan*

Wang Xiangxi, Minister of Emergency Management, *China*

Cliff Holtz, CEO of American Red Cross, *US*

Lin Fei-fan, Sunflower Student Movement leader, *Taiwan*

Huang Kuo-chang, Sunflower Student Movement leader, *Taiwan*

Shin Ick-hyun, CEO of weapons manufacturer LIG Nex1, *South Korea*

Wang Dongjin, Chairman of China National Offshore Oil Corporation, *China*