

Fortnightly Review

Russell Hsiao

Taiwan's "Warm Power": Sharing Lessons on Digital Governance

I-wei Jennifer Chang

US-Taiwan Defense Ties Advance with Senior Official Visit

Michael Mazza

Taiwan's New Southbound Policy: Challenges of Visa Waiver Reciprocity with Southeast Asian Countries

Po-chun Li

Fortnightly Review

By: Russell Hsiao

Russell Hsiao is the executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute (GTI) and editor-in-chief of the Global Taiwan Brief.

Beijing Claims 72 Taiwan Nationals Participating in China's "Thousand Talents Plan"

In an interesting revelation, the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) State Council—which is the central government agency in charge of implementing the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policy towards Taiwan—[disclosed](#) that there are currently more Taiwan nationals participating in China's "Thousand Talents Plan" (千人計畫) than the Taiwan government reportedly previously estimated. On November 27, the TAO held a press conference to explain the results of the recently announced [26 preferential economic measures](#) and its 31 antecedents released February 2018. In referring to the "Thousand Talents Plan," which Western intelligence agencies believe facilitates the theft of intellectual property from other countries, TAO spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian (朱鳳蓮) revealed that there are currently 72 experts and scholars from Taiwan who are part of the program. The figure provided by TAO is nearly double a previous estimate in the Taiwan media that reportedly cited Taiwan government data. In response, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC)—the cabinet level agency in charge of cross-strait policy—[stated](#) that TAO claims have not been verified and that it is investigating the matter.

In 2008, China launched the "Overseas High-level Talent Recruitment Plan" (海外高層次人才引進計畫) (also known as the "Thousand Talents Plan"), which aims to recruit foreign and overseas Chinese professionals to help China develop key technologies, high-tech industries, and emerging disciplines. According to the staff report "[Threats to the US Research Enterprise: China's Talent Recruitment Plans](#)" prepared by the US Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations:

"... China has created and manages more than 200 talent recruitment plans Chi-

The Global Taiwan Brief is a bi-weekly publication released every other Wednesday and provides insight into the latest news on Taiwan.

Editor-in-Chief

Russell Hsiao

Staff Editor

Katherine Schultz

The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Global Taiwan Institute.

To view web sources cited in the published papers (underlined in printed text), visit <http://global-taiwan.org/2019/12/vol-4-issue-23/>.

Global Taiwan Institute
1836 Jefferson Place NW,
Washington DC 20036
contact@globaltaiwan.org

To subscribe, visit
<http://globaltaiwan.org/subscribe/>

© 2019 · Global Taiwan Institute

na designed the Thousand Talents Plan to recruit 2,000 high-quality overseas talents, including scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and finance experts. The plan provides salaries, research funding, lab space, and other incentives to lure experts into researching for China. According to one report, by 2017, China dramatically exceeded its recruitment goal, having recruited more than 7,000 “high-end professionals,” including several Nobel laureates.”

The “Thousand Talents Plan” has come under greater scrutiny by national security officials worldwide as a channel that the Chinese government is using to recruit foreign scientists, engineers, and other researchers with specialized skills to help support the CCP’s ambitious economic, industrial, and military modernization goals. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has listed thousands of scholars as the focus of investigation, and Chinese scientists who have been included in the project have been arrested for spying.

According to a previous media [report](#) citing Taiwan government data covered in an earlier [brief](#), there have only been 33 known cases of Taiwan nationals who have been recruited under the “Thousand Talents Plan.” As noted in the Hoover-Asia Society [study](#), “[i]n many cases, these individuals do not disclose receiving the TTP money to their employer, which for US government employees is illegal and for corporate personnel likely represents a conflict of interest that violates their employee agreement.” It is reasonable to assume that there is an underreporting of people receiving these funds and that the Taiwan government’s estimate was conservative at best. For instance, as a previous brief documented, the Chinese government is also known for [using intermediaries](#) such as headhunting organizations to recruit both potential assets and unsuspecting researchers in Taiwan.

The [MAC](#) pointed out how China’s recent efforts to usurp scientific research talents through the “Thousand Talents Plan” have aroused the concern of European and American countries; and relevant agencies in Taiwan are reviewing and strengthening safeguard measures and laws to guard against China’s theft of sensitive scientific research and intellectual property. For instance, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology have issued guid-

ance in accordance with policy directives from the Executive Yuan to public and private scientific research institutions, universities and colleges, full-time teachers and related personnel, and key R&D projects. According to MAC, the Executive Yuan has also formed an *ad hoc* group and instructed both ministries to collect relevant information in order to clarify whether there are reports of current members of the teaching staff and scientific research personnel participating in the “Thousand Talents Plan” and whether there are any violations of the relevant provisions of cross-Straits regulations.

The main point: The Chinese government claims that there are currently 72 experts and scholars from Taiwan who are part of the program. The figure provided by TAO is nearly double the previous estimate in the Taiwan media that reportedly cited Taiwan government data.

Note: A previous brief referred to the “Thousand Talents Plan” as the “Thousand Talents Program.” The two usages refer to the same initiative.

Reshuffling in Taiwan’s Political Warfare System

The director for the Political Warfare Bureau at the Republic of China (Taiwan) Ministry of National Defense (MND), [Lieutenant General Chien Shih-wei](#) (簡士偉), has been in his current position for only several months. Chien replaced Lieutenant General Huang Kai-sen (黃凱森), who retired at the end of August and had served in that position for less than a year before his retirement. Chien previously served as the political warfare director for the Taiwan Army. The position left vacant by Jian’s promotion has been filled by Major General Yang An (楊安), who served as the director of Fu Hsing Kang College (國防大學政治作戰學院, Political Warfare Cadres Academy) at National Defense University (NDU)—the military’s premier political warfare academy for training military officers in this increasingly important discipline. The appointments set off a chain of reassignments within Taiwan’s political warfare system.

According to a Taiwan media [report](#), the number of senior military leaders from the Taiwan military’s political warfare system (e.g., those who graduated from the

NDU's FHK) has been decreasing in recent years. Currently, the only billet filled by someone with a military rank of lieutenant general from the political warfare system is the director for the Political Warfare Bureau (PWB, 政治作戰局). In 2013, during a period of significant thaw in overt political friction in the Taiwan Strait under the previous Ma Ying-jeou administration, the organization underwent substantial reorganization and was apparently downgraded from a department-level unit to a bureau-level unit. The position of director—which was previously held by someone with the rank of general—was replaced by a [lieutenant general](#).

Moreover, the current highest-ranking military leaders who rose from the political warfare system within Taiwan are now those who graduated from the military academy in the mid-1970s. For instance, Jian graduated from the class of 74 (年班), while Yang—his successor—graduated the class of 75. Major generals who graduated from around the same class years include former Reserve Command Director Major General Hsieh Ming-te (謝明德, class of 75) and Deputy Commander of Army Command Major General Chao Tai-chuan (趙代川, class of 75), Dean of the Political Warfare Academy Major General Wen Tien-yu (文天佑, class of 76), and Commander of the Eighth Army Corps, Major General Wu Li-wen (武立文, class of 76). With ranks no higher than lieutenant general and with most reaching major generals—there is also a heavy representation of the Army in the system.

Prior to Army Lieutenant General Huang Kai-sen, the head of the PWB was [Navy Vice Admiral Wen Zhen-guo](#) (聞振國; b. 1958), who became director in late 2015. Wen served for nearly three years in that position and retired in November 2018. Wen is the [first sailor](#) to serve in the position since the rank of the military officer holding the position was lowered in 2013. The current deputy director of the PWB is [Air Force Major General Yu Qin-wen](#) (于親文). Yu has been in that position since September 2017. According to observers, the decision to have an airman serve as deputy director is part of a broader ongoing effort under the Tsai administration to [rebalance](#) the representation of the three services ostensibly for countering Chinese political warfare activities. Since the unit's reorganization in 1963 when it was renamed as the Political Warfare Bureau, the unit did not have an [air force officer](#) in a

senior leadership position.

The broader political warfare system has been undergoing related planning for personnel [adjustments](#) as Major General Hsieh, the head of political warfare for the PLA Reserve Command, also retired on December 1. According to a list obtained and reported on by the local media, the post of political warfare director for the Reserve Command is expected to be filled by Chao Tai-chuan, the deputy director of political warfare of the Army Command, whose position will be filled by Wu Li-wen, the director of political warfare of the 8th Army Corps. The post of political warfare director of the Army 8 Corps is expected to be taken over by Chen Chong-ji, the political warfare director of the Army Logistics Command.

Additionally, the dean of FHKC, Major General Wen Tien-yu, is expected to be transferred to the post of director for political warfare at National Defense University. The college and the political warfare bureau are two separate entities. Major General Chen Yulin (陳育琳), director for political warfare of the 6th Army Corps, will be transferred to serve as dean of FHKC, becoming the first female dean of the political warfare college. Yu Hsi-ming (余熙明), the political warfare director of the Reserve Command, is scheduled to take over as director of the political warfare of the 6th Army Corps. The [list](#) obtained by Taiwan media also points out that Major General Lou Wei-chieh (樓偉傑), director of the cultural propaganda division (文化宣教處長) of the PWD, will take over as director of the Reserve Command. And after MND Financial Service Center Political Warfare Director Tang Mingde (唐明德) is to take over as the director of Political Warfare at the Matsu Defense Command, the incumbent Gu Lidu (辜麗都) will be [transferred](#) to the position of director of political warfare of the Army Logistics Command.

The PWB is the country's premier military unit designed to counter communist influence operations directed primarily against Taiwan's military. The PWB had its [genesis](#) in the early days of the Whampoa Military Academy (黃埔軍校) established in 1924. In 1950, the name of the unit was changed from the Political Work Bureau (政工局) to Political Department (政治部) under the Ministry of National Defense, and a year later elevated to the General Political Department (總政治部). In August 1963—at the height of cross-Strait

military tensions—the name of the unit was modified to the General Political Warfare Department (總政治作戰部).

Since the 1980s after the opening up of the Taiwan Strait, the PWD's mission atrophied as cross-Strait ties improved and the objectives of political warfare became muddled and were no longer clearly defined. While the PLA continued its political warfare, the PWD suffered setback after setback as retired generals were heavily courted by CCP United Front activities, among other reasons.

The [setback](#) that perhaps best captured this troubling trend is the one of Hsu Li-nong (許歷農; b. 1918), a [retired general](#) who formerly served as director of the PWD from 1983 to 1987. Hsu was responsible for countering communist ideology and psychological warfare but turned into a vocal advocate for unification with the PRC after his retirement. In a strange twist of fate, last year, the retired general issued a [public letter](#) urging the two sides to issue a communiqué stating that there is only “One China in the world, Taiwan and ‘mainland’ are a part of China, China’s territory and sovereignty brook no division” (世界上祇有一個中國，台灣和大陸都是中國的一部分，中國的領土、主權不容分割). Hsu also said that the two sides should support each other economically and militarily, as well as jointly participate in political and diplomatic activities.

While the recent personnel changes within the Taiwan military's political warfare system appears to be routine, the cycle of reshuffling within the system seems to point to a systematic problem in a shortage of senior brass to lead planning, training, and execution of the military's political warfare strategy. Leveraging the assets of these psychological warriors should be par for the course for engaging in intense gray zone competition with the People's Liberation Army (PLA)—especially in the political sphere. The appearance of this challenge at the top of the also raises questions about whether there are enough mid-level professionals to fill in the ranks and billets.

The main point: The reshuffling within Taiwan military's political warfare systems appears routine but may point to a shortage of senior brass and those rising in the tanks to lead political warfare work within the military.

Taiwan's “Warm Power”: Sharing Lessons on Digital Governance

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

I-wei Jennifer Chang is a research fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

As Taiwan seeks to gain international space amid Beijing's “sharp power,” it has pursued a new avenue for promoting its “warm power” (暖實力) through its diplomatic efforts to share the island's open government and digital technology experience with other countries. On the sidelines of the 74th United Nations (UN) General Assembly in September 2019, Taiwan's first digital minister without portfolio [Audrey Tang](#) (唐鳳) spoke at several forums in New York on how Taiwan could advance the UN Sustainable Development Goals via its digital governance experience. Tang has called Taipei's overseas exchanges on digital governance its “warm power”—in contrast to China's “sharp power.” Indeed, Taiwan's teeming civic technology community has enabled new forms of citizen participation and collaboration with the government that serve to strengthen democratic governance.

The two sides of the Taiwan Strait could not be more different when it comes to the use of technology to impact governance issues. The difference between the two sides is at bottom the function of the nature of the regime. Taiwan's democratic system and China's authoritarian state each have different political objectives. For China, technology has become a more potent tool to exert control over wayward or contentious populations under Chinese rule. One of the most extreme examples of techno-governance under an authoritarian state today is the Chinese government's use of artificial intelligence (AI), [facial recognition technology](#), and other surveillance technology to exert a new level of absolute control over its Uyghur population of [11 million](#) in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Technology has helped Chinese authorities round up more than [one million](#) Uyghurs, as well as Kazakhs, who are now being held in internment camps in China, and Xinjiang has become a [high-tech police state](#) replete with security cameras and endless checkpoints. Chinese security camera manufacturers [Hikvision and Dahua Technology](#) have played key roles in the mass surveillance of Uyghurs under AI-enabled ethno-reli-

gious persecution.

By contrast, Taiwan's government has used technology to enhance civic interest and participation in governance issues and strengthen public trust in government. In Taiwan, [online collaboration](#) has become a cornerstone of governance. Taiwan's government has called for greater online discussion and participation through its national platforms such as "[vTaiwan](#)" and "[Join](#)," as well as Taipei City's "[i-Voting](#)." vTaiwan is an [online-offline consultative process](#) that brings together government ministries, elected representatives, scholars, business leaders, civil society organizations, and citizens to participate in government decision-making on issues related to the [digital economy](#). Since it was launched, vTaiwan has addressed at least [30 issues](#), and the majority of issues discussed through vTaiwan has led to [government action](#). In addition, the Join online platform enables anyone to start an e-petition, and once the e-petition has [5,000 signatures](#), the government must publicly respond. Taipei City Government's i-Voting platform enables city residents to [cast online ballots](#) on city-wide issues, such as voting on [opening hours of the Taipei Zoo](#).

[Open government and social entrepreneurship](#) are important components of boosting civic participation in policymaking. As part of its [open government initiative](#), Taiwan's government has created a network of "Participation Officers" (開放政府聯絡人) (PO) comprised of public officials in each ministry who can assist the [public sector and general public](#) to understand each other's viewpoints on policy issues. The network of POs strives to engage civil society on governance issues while also integrating the internal views and positions of government stakeholders [at all levels and across different ministries](#). In addition, Taiwan has promoted social innovation, or the creation of [new solutions to social issues](#) through innovative ideas and technological applications, according to Minister Tang. As a result, Taiwan's government launched the [Social Innovation Lab](#) (社會創新實驗中心) in 2017 in Taipei and other units throughout the island to support "[social enterprises](#)," which transform business ideas from a profit-driven model towards solving social issues and making societal impact.

Since [2012](#), the civic technology (also known as civic tech, 公民科技) movement has blossomed in Taiwan.

Civic tech creates [new technology tools](#) to promote citizen participation and uses [open data](#) to enhance government transparency, legislative supervision, and government accountability. Through data visualization tools that make technical policy discussions more accessible and easier to understand, civic tech helps to provide access to critical information on governance issues to a lay audience. A primary objective is to invigorate Taiwan's civil society to become [more interested](#) and more actively engaged in online and offline dialogue on current policy and governance issues. As Minister Tang wrote in an op-ed in *The New York Times* in October 2019, "[Democracy improves as more people participate. And digital technology remains one of the best ways to improve participation—as long as the focus is on finding common ground and creating consensus, not division.](#)"

Are there limits to technology-driven political change, particularly since social media platforms can contribute to polarization of opinions? Facebook, Twitter, and other social media and messaging platforms have been widely cited as playing a critical role in recent revolutions and social movements spanning from the Middle East and North Africa to Taiwan and Hong Kong. Protesters in the the early [Arab uprisings](#) in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011 organized online and captured videos and images of the demonstrations against autocratic regimes. During the 2014 Sunflower Movement in Taiwan, students protesting the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (海峽兩岸服務貿易協議) with China occupied Taiwan's legislature, set up [wireless Internet](#) to [livestream](#) from inside the building, and used [crowdfunding](#) on the Internet to raise money for the movement. More recently, Hong Kong protesters have utilized online platforms such as [LIHKG](#) and messaging app [Telegram](#) to organize and swiftly mobilize demonstrators, while the messaging app has helped to [protect the identities](#) of Hong Kong protesters from police infiltration and Chinese government retaliation. Yet some analysts have argued that such massive and spontaneous social-media driven revolutions and rebellions have all [ended in failure](#) because they cannot, by their "[leaderless](#)" nature, bridge disagreements or build consensus. They argue that [political capital and bargaining](#), which technology-driven revolutions lack, are necessary to effectively translate such anti-government movements into lasting political change.

However, Taiwan's Sunflower Movement provides an example of civic tech in action that led to political change. During the Sunflower Movement, civic-minded hackers and computer programmers of the [g0v](#) ("gov-zero," 零時政府) movement within Taiwan's civic tech community rose to prominence. Minister Tang, who was a civic hacker during the Sunflower Movement, has been an active contributor to the [g0v](#) community. Since its inception in 2012, the [g0v](#) community has sought to make [government information more understandable and accessible](#) to all members of society. The [g0v](#) community later became incorporated into Taiwan's democratic governance process following the Sunflower Movement. Taiwan's promotion of open government and digital governance aims to strengthen the island's participatory democracy and invigorate civic engagement through online platforms.

On the international stage, Taiwan has used its digital governance experience to collaborate with other countries. In 2018 and 2019, Taiwan's government sent Minister Tang to speak on digital governance at several forums, including at Columbia University and the Asia Society Policy Institute, in New York, while the UN General Assembly convened. Tang highlighted [Taiwan's adherence to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG), despite remaining excluded from the international body. Minister Tang stated that Taiwan's efforts on digital governance align with [SDG targets](#) such as enhancing international cooperation on technology and public-private and civic society partnerships. Tang's appearances in New York were part of the Foreign Ministry's broader campaign to promote [Taiwan's inclusion in SDG-related meetings and consultations](#).

As Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been promoting a "[Taiwan Can Help](#)" motto, the country's innovative capability and leadership in civic technology digital governance serves as another venue for bilateral and multilateral cooperation and to promote Taiwan's standing in the world. Minister Tang said that sharing Taiwan's experiences in digital governance is one of the ways that the island can [break through its diplomatic challenges](#). Taiwan could share its technological and digital tools of governance with newer democracies that may not have the adequate institutional capacity to engage the public as well as manage the challenges of the digital age, including misinformation and disin-

formation.

Amid the global surge in interest in open government and accountability, Taiwan has expressed interest in sharing best practices and joining the multilateral, intergovernmental Open Government Partnership (OGP, 開放政府夥伴關係). Since its inception in 2011, [79 countries and 20 local members](#) have joined the OGP, including the United States, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Brazil, and Mexico. These national and subnational governments, working alongside civil society organizations, must create an [action plan](#) comprised of numerous commitments to open government. While Taiwan is unable to join as a member country, it has sent civil society organizations including the [Open Culture Foundation and g0v community](#) to the OGP summits.

The main point: Taiwan has utilized online platforms to enhance public interest and participation in democratic governance. At the same time, Taiwan is promoting its digital governance experience as a way to enhance cooperation with other countries and elevate its international standing through its "warm power" in contrast to China's "sharp power."

US-Taiwan Defense Ties Advance with Senior Official Visit

By: Michael Mazza

Michael Mazza is a senior non-resident fellow at GTI. He is also a visiting fellow in foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he analyzes US defense policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

On November 22, Taiwan's *United Daily News* broke the news that Heino Klinck, deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia, had visited Taiwan during the week of November 18. The *Taipei Times* [described](#) it as the senior-most visit to Taiwan by a Department of Defense official in over a decade, pointing to a stunning level of American neglect over that period of time. Although the Pentagon and Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) regularly engage at lower levels via a variety of dialogue structures, DASD Klinck and his counterparts surely had much to discuss. American

and Taiwan priorities for these discussions may have included some or all of the following.

Righting a Wrong

Although much American attention has been focused on Chinese actions in the South China Sea and East China Sea in recent years (and for good reason), the Taiwan Strait may remain the most dangerous flashpoint in Asia. It is in the Taiwan Strait where what we might call the “core values” of both China and the United States come into direct conflict. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) may see its very survival at stake; at stake for the United States are national security interests that Washington has sought to defend since at least World War II. In the event of a crisis, China likely has far less flexibility to alter its position in the Taiwan Strait than it would in the East or South China seas. Meanwhile, an American president might find that, even in the absence of a formal defense treaty with Taipei (as with Tokyo and others), he or she would be hard pressed to sit out a conflict over Taiwan’s fate.

There are, then, good reasons for American and Taiwan officials to engage at the very *highest* levels. Taiwan, after all, is a country that the United States might one day go to war to defend. As I have argued in these pages [previously](#), the American president owes it to the American people, not to mention the men and women in uniform under his command, to speak with his or her counterpart in Taipei—for in wartime, it is perhaps no less important to understand one’s allies than to understand one’s enemies.

Of course, American presidents do not engage directly with their Taiwanese counterparts. And for the past decade, neither have deputy assistant defense secretaries responsible for the region, at least not in Taipei. There is only one possible reason more senior leaders have not permitted this—to avoid upsetting China. Given the stakes, such neglect would be difficult to justify even if it had convinced Beijing to modify its behavior. Over the past 10 years, of course, China has conducted an island-building campaign in the South China Sea, challenged Japanese control over islands and resources in the East China Sea, dangerously harassed US military forces in Asia, and carried out an unyielding pressure campaign against Taiwan.

A DASD visit to Taiwan corrects what has been a de-

cade-long mistake and is likely to do so without markedly inflaming tensions with the People’s Republic.

Checking Up on the ODC

Retired Admiral Lee Hsi-ming (李喜明, b. 1955), Taiwan’s former chief of general staff, led the development of the Overall Defense Concept (ODC), which former US Defense Department official Drew Thompson [describes](#) as “a revolutionary new approach to Taiwan’s defense.” Public details of the ODC are scant, but it represents an answer to China’s growing military threat and to Washington’s years-long efforts to encourage Taiwan to adopt asymmetric and innovative approaches to tackling that threat. The US-China Economic and Security Review Commission’s recently published annual [report](#) describes Taiwan’s progress in implementing the ODC:

“To further implement Taiwan’s Overall Defense Concept, which was unveiled in 2017, Taiwan allocated funding for 60 small fast-attack missile craft, expedited production of new missile defense systems and mobile land-based antiship missile platforms, and began construction of four rapid mine-laying ships. The Overall Defense Concept emphasizes the development of asymmetric capabilities and tactics to capitalize on Taiwan’s defensive advantages, enhance resilience, and exploit the PLA’s weaknesses.”

This is all good news. The mastermind behind the ODC, however, has retired and, for now, is out of the government. While the ODC remains the policy, the Department of Defense may have concerns about its longevity. Does the ODC have sufficient institutional buy-in to outlast changes in military leadership? Has bureaucratic resistance (and there must be some) to what amounts to a significant change in military strategy asserted itself in the wake of ADM Lee’s retirement?

Notably, President Tsai Ing-wen has spoken favorably about the ODC. In a speech delivered via video link to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, Tsai [avowed](#) that the ODC “has my support 100 percent.” She brought it up again, unprompted, during the event’s question and answer session, noting that her government would “focus on funding the capabilities we need under the overall defense concept,” and claiming, again, “I am committed to

ODC, which will make our armed forces smarter, more nimble, and survivable.” This level of public presidential support certainly suggests the ODC is here to stay (barring a change in government come next year). DASD Klinck may have been seeking confirmation that this is, indeed, the case.

Arms Sales

DASD Klinck and his counterparts in Taiwan may have also discussed priorities for the defense relationship going forward. There have been a series of notable arms sales approvals over the last year, including for new [F-16V fighter aircraft](#) and [M1A2T Abrams tanks](#). With those significant accomplishments in the rear-view mirror, however, it is important to keep up the positive momentum and determine next steps.

A key priority for MND is assistance on developing its indigenous defense submarine (IDS). In the spring of 2018, media [reporting](#) indicated that the Trump administration had approved the license needed for American defense firms to sell relevant technology to Taiwan. It is unclear if US participation in the IDS program has been forthcoming, but defense and foreign ministry officials continue to describe such assistance as a top request. Taiwan [broke ground](#) on a submarine shipyard earlier this year and plans to put to sea its first self-build submarine in 2024. Relatively speaking, given the magnitude of Taiwan’s challenge in designing and building its own submarine, 2024 is right around the corner. With MND looking to graduate from the program’s design phase, it would be surprising if this was not on the agenda during Klinck’s visit.

Beyond submarines, Taiwan’s priorities for foreign military acquisitions are somewhat unclear, at least in the public domain. The United States has yet to approve pending requests for TOW anti-armor and Javelin anti-tank missiles, which Taipei presumably still desires. A September [report](#) indicated that Taiwan is looking to purchase M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers and possibly M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS), an issue I wrote about in a previous issue of the [Global Taiwan Brief](#). Whether new letters of request for these or other American systems are in the works is unclear.

Recent defense talks may have, in part, focused on ensuring both MND and DOD are on the same page re-

garding the necessity and feasibility of potential future purchases. In particular, meetings may have included discussions of the sale of sea mines, anti-ship munitions, unmanned aerial vehicles, unmanned underwater vehicles, electronic warfare assets, and maritime domain awareness capabilities.

Bilateral Military Exercises

It may be the case that Taiwan’s priorities for the defense relationship do not, at the moment, fall under the arms sales category. Although the relationship involves far more than the provision of “defense articles,” as the Taiwan Relations Act puts it, there are areas where ties could be further enhanced. In particular, bilateral military training can be and should be expanded significantly.

The United States military is arguably the world’s most experienced and best trained. Exercising alongside US forces, Taiwan’s own forces will both come to better understand their own weaknesses and more effectively address them. Bilateral training should occur across all the services.

Perhaps the lowest hanging fruit in this regard would be Taiwan’s participation in the Red Flag. The US Air Force [describes](#) Red Flag as the service’s “premier air-to-air combat training exercise.” It often includes international partners and “provides aircrews the experience of multiple, intensive air combat sorties in the safety of a training environment.” Taiwan’s F-16 pilots already conduct training in the United States at Luke Air Force Base and will [move](#) in the coming years to Tucson International Airport—both locations are just a short flight away from Nellis Air Force Base, the home of Red Flag. Taiwan’s defense officials have long put participation at the top of their wish list and it would be surprising if they did not raise it with DASD Klinck during his recent visit. If the United States is willing to sell Taiwan advanced fighter aircraft, it should want Taiwan to operate them at the highest level.

Taiwan has also long asked to participate in RIMPAC, major multilateral naval exercises held in waters off Hawaii every other year. Although Taiwan should not abandon this quest, it might consider prioritizing bilateral naval exercises instead. In a bilateral setting, both countries can work more specifically on their ability to communicate smoothly and interoperate, and can

work to enhance the warfighting proficiency of all ships involved (which is not the case in a multilateral setting like RIMPAC). Because such exercises can occur on the high seas, they might be seen as less potentially provocative to China than exercises on American or Taiwanese soil.

Finally, given the US government's insistence that Taiwan first and foremost focus on defending against invasion, DOD should be prepared to assist Taiwan in training its forces to fight on the beaches. For Taiwan, there would be no better opposing force with which to train than the United States Marine Corps. Such training would, by necessity, involve large numbers of Taiwan ground forces on US soil or American forces in Taiwan. Neither Taipei nor Washington appears ready to take that step, but DASD Klinck's visit to the island would have been a good time to start having the discussion.

The main point: The first visit by a US deputy assistant secretary of defense to Taiwan in over a decade provided an opportunity for bilateral discussions on priority areas including the overall defense concept, arms sales, and opportunities for bilateral training.

Taiwan's New Southbound Policy: Challenges of Visa Waiver Reciprocity with Southeast Asian Countries

By: Po-chun Li

Pochun Li is a M.A. Candidate at Johns Hopkins University. He was an intern at the Global Taiwan Institute in fall 2018.

As a measure under Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (新南向政策), Taiwan has granted Thai citizens visa waivers. This has helped to boost tourism to Taiwan and lessened the local economy's reliance on Chinese tourists. Since President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) simplified tourist visa applications and granted visa waiver programs for several select countries, the number of visitors from these "Southbound" countries [reached a new high of 2.59 million in 2018](#)—an increase of 45 percent over 2016—and accounting for nearly a quarter of all foreign visitors to Taiwan. Furthermore, in the first

nine months of 2018, spending by the "Southbound" visitors also [reached USD \\$2.708 billion](#), becoming the second largest source for Taiwan's tourism economy.

Yet, the [Thailand Trade and Economic Office in Taipei](#) (TTEO) announced in November 2019 that Taiwanese passport holders are required to apply for a visa online and to schedule an appointment to submit their passports in person at the office. The visa applicants would also need to provide bank details as proof that they can cover their travel expenses. Such increase in complexity of applying for a Thai visa has [caused public concerns and inconvenience](#). This new TTEO measure followed another TTEO attempt to [raise administrative fees for Thai visas](#) in August 2018, arousing public dissatisfaction about unreciprocal treatment towards Taiwanese citizens. Under pressure from widespread opposition by the Taiwanese public, the TTEO [conceded and withdrew the decision](#), clarifying that Taiwanese citizens could still utilize the existing methods at the same price to apply for tourist visas at the consular office, while visa-processing centers would serve as alternative channels for those who do not wish to stand in line at the consular office.

Thailand's Decision Making on Visa Reciprocity

In the past few years, Thailand has tried to provide near-reciprocal visa treatments toward Taiwanese citizens. At the end of 2016, though standing in line at the consular office is still required to submit a visa application, [Thailand granted a visa fee waiver program](#) (免簽證費優惠) to 21 countries and territories including Taiwan, which lasted 9 months. Moreover, Thai government also granted another [visa-on-arrival fee waiver program](#) (免落地簽證費優惠) to the same beneficiary group, from November 15, 2018 to October 31, 2019. Taiwanese citizens were able to save 2,000 Baht (USD \$65) and allowed to stay 15 days if they choose to apply for a tourist visa upon their arrival to Thailand. [The program has been further extended to April 30, 2020.](#)

Understandably, Thailand weighs potential trade-offs when deciding whether to give Taiwan reciprocal treatment. In June 2018, Taiwan's Minister without Portfolio, Chang Ching-sen (張景森), [told Thailand's Representative in Taipei](#), Thongchai Chasawath, that if Thailand does not provide a visa waiver for Taiwan, Thailand could definitely gain more visa revenue, but

tourist income in Thailand would drop accordingly. Tongchai did not provide direct response on why Thailand had not yet granted reciprocal treatment to Taiwan, and only said that they considered before, but [“Thailand has its tough nut to crack”](#) (家家有本難念的經). What would make Thailand risk losing its tourist income only to maintain the status quo?

One plausible and likely explanation is that Thailand faces pressure from China to limit its ties with Taiwan. Such pressure can be seen and understood from Thailand’s previous visa policy decisions. Whether it is the [visa fee waiver program in 2016-2017](#) or the visa-on-arrival fee waiver program in 2018-2020, Taiwan is not the primary target country under Thailand’s visa policies. Both policies were all targeted to “21 countries and territories,” in which Taiwan and China were both classified into the same country list. And if Thailand provides Taiwan a visa waiver program, then Thailand may also be pressured to grant the same privilege to China. On top of that, China provides the largest source of tourists for Thailand. In 2018, [10.66 million Chinese tourists](#) visited Thailand, while Taiwanese tourists were only estimated at [0.6 million visitors](#). As a result, If Thailand currently has to face the pressure from China and gains more tourist revenue through more visitors from China, then there is no incentive for Thailand to grant a visa free policy to Taiwan.

Other Areas in Southeast Asia, Beyond Thailand

[Similar policies](#) exist in the other two Southeast Asian countries that also receive visa-free treatment from Taiwan. Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines maintain similar visa policies for Taiwanese citizens, with the [former requiring a BNS\\$20 \(USD \\$18\) visa-on-arrival fee](#) and [the latter requiring online e-visa application beforehand with a NT\\$ 1,100 \(USD \\$35.45\) fee](#).

In comparison, while the Philippines granted China a 14-day visa waiver program, Taiwanese citizens still need to complete the online e-visa application prior to obtaining a 30-day entry permit due to the Philippines’ implementation of its [“One-China Policy.”](#) Under the special relations between Taiwan and the Philippines, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office is not considered to be an official diplomatic institution. Therefore, its operation relies on visa application fees, lessening the possibility for Manila authorities to introduce a vi-

sa-free policy for Taiwan.

Brunei is the only country in the world that grants China and Taiwan the exact same visa policy treatment — [visa-on-arrival with a 14-day entry permit](#).

These examples all show that when it comes to implementing visa policies, Southeast Asian countries have to take the China factor into consideration regardless of Taiwan’s visa waiver program. All in all, among these three Southeast Asian countries that were included in Taiwan’s visa waiver program on a trial basis, only Thailand provided a near reciprocal treatment to Taiwan.

Lessons and a Way Forward for Taiwan

Despite the unreciprocal treatment, continuation of the visa waiver program for Southeast Asian countries is indeed a prudent and sustainable way to maintain Taiwan’s soft power – in both the economic and cultural sense – to stand firm on the international stage. [According to Taiwan Tourism Bureau](#), the number of Thai tourists to Taiwan reached 124,409 in 2015, and since the implementation of visa waiver program for Thai citizens, that number has increased to 195,640 in 2016 and skyrocketed to 292,534 in 2017. [Chang Ching-Sen also estimated](#) that through multiplying each tourist by NT\$50,000, a net increase of more than 170,000 tourists could bring over NT\$10 billion revenue in the future, proving that the visa waiver program is an effective policy.

Apart from economic independence, more Southeast Asian tourists visiting Taiwan also means that they are increasingly exposed to Taiwan’s culture. As the core means of projecting its soft power, Taiwanese culture has the potential to enhance the international visibility of Taiwan, since more individuals from Southeast Asian countries will be able to distinguish Taiwan from the PRC. Broadening Taiwan’s tourism industry by embracing and relying on more Southeast Asian tourists can help equip Taiwan with resilience toward the challenges ahead and put its eggs into different baskets. Mainland China recently announced its intention to [stop issuing individual travel permits to Taiwan](#) in late July, and this has triggered public concern regarding possible implications for the island’s economy. Whether Southeast Asian tourists to Taiwan maintain the increasing trend and thus fill the space created by the China travel ban accordingly is still worth observing.

What is certain is that the China travel ban is aimed at impacting the result of the coming presidential election on the island, bringing a new challenge for Tsai's administration and its New Southbound Policy.

The main point: Taiwan has provided visa waivers for Thailand and many other Southeast Asian countries with the goal of improving people flows and supporting Taiwan's New Southbound Policy. These Southeast Asian countries have demonstrated some reciprocity toward Taiwan although the China factor likely still affects these governments' consideration.