

## Taiwanese Preference for Status Quo Remains Constant Even as Views Harden

Russell Hsiao

## Taiwan's Haiti Ties in Spotlight After President Moïse's Assassination

I-wei Jennifer Chang

## Video Warns Japan of Nuclear Strike over Taiwan Dispute: Policy Shift, or Mere Bluster?

J. Michael Cole

## Beijing Blames Taiwan Organizations for Unrest in Hong Kong

John Dotson

## Language Diplomacy and Bilingual Ambitions in Taiwan

Isabel Eliassen

## America's "No First Use" Nuclear Doctrine Debate: Implications for the Taiwan Strait

Michael Mazza

## Taiwanese Preference for Status Quo Remains Constant Even as Views Harden

By: Russell Hsiao

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

One of the issues related to public opinion in Taiwan most closely gauged by the international community is the attitude of the island's population towards independence from—or unification with—China. The reason for this interest is obvious given the possible consequences of a decision by the government in Taiwan to move in either direction. While President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) has been widely recognized by Washington and the international community for her steady approach to maintaining cross-strait stability despite Beijing's increasing belligerence and growing domestic pressure, there are [concerns](#) that the United States should refrain from taking steps toward "strategic clarity" in terms of an explicit commitment to defend Taiwan against a Chinese invasion. This is due in part to concerns about the future of Taiwan politics—namely, that a future president of Taiwan would break from Tsai's approach and radically alter the status quo.

Despite apprehensions over the possibility of a radical change in Taipei, such concerns are—at least in the near to medium term—not supported by a preliminary analysis about trendlines in public opinion within Taiwan. Indeed, the [latest poll](#) by the National Chengchi University's Election Study Center (國立政治大學 選舉研究中心) released on July 20, 2021 shows that an overwhelming 87.4 percent of the respondents continue to support maintaining some form of the current status quo across the Taiwan Strait, with only small fractions of the population preferring to declare independence or unification as soon as possible (5.6 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively).

[Some experts](#) concerned by a possible US move towards "strategic clarity" point to the pro-independence proclivities of the current vice president of Taiwan and the risk that the United States could be pulled into an military conflict with China should Taiwan's ruling party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨), win another presidential election.

*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  
**Associate Editor**  
John Dotson  
**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 <https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/07/vol-6-issue-15/>*

Global Taiwan Institute  
1836 Jefferson Place NW,  
Washington DC 20036  
[contact@globaltaiwan.org](mailto:contact@globaltaiwan.org)

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

© 2021 · Global Taiwan Institute

Yet, such concerns tend to ignore the fact that any explicit commitment is never unconditional. Moreover, observed trends of public opinion within the country since at least the 2000s (when Taiwan had its first peaceful transfer of political power) have demonstrated that any elected leader, even the president, would be very unlikely to radically change the balance of public opinion within Taiwan.

For instance, at the beginning of President Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) first term in 2000, the first DPP president was widely seen as pro-independence and took notable steps in that direction. At the time, the majority of Taiwan's population [preferred](#) some form of the status quo at 77.7 percent—whereas only 3.1 percent and 2.0 percent preferred independence or unification as soon as possible, respectively. At the end of his term in 2008, 82 percent still [indicated](#) they preferred some form of the status quo—with those preferring independence as soon as possible at only 7.1

percent, and supporters of unification at 1.5 percent. This level of support for these particular preferences [remained relatively stable](#) during President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) term from 2008 to 2016. President Ma, on the other hand, was seen as pro-unification and accordingly took steps toward more closely integrating the two economies. In other words, the impact of the elected leader—despite that person's perceived preference for independence or unification—had little significant impact on public opinion and arguably, when the public determined that they veered too far in one direction, they were voted out of office. This happened in 2008 and [again in 2016](#).

There are, however, interesting indicators of some subtle shifts in the attitudes among Taiwan's population on specific preferences regarding the status quo. Indeed, the status quo itself is not monolith or static. Although it is consistently clear that a majority of voters prefer some form of the status quo, [the NCCU poll](#)

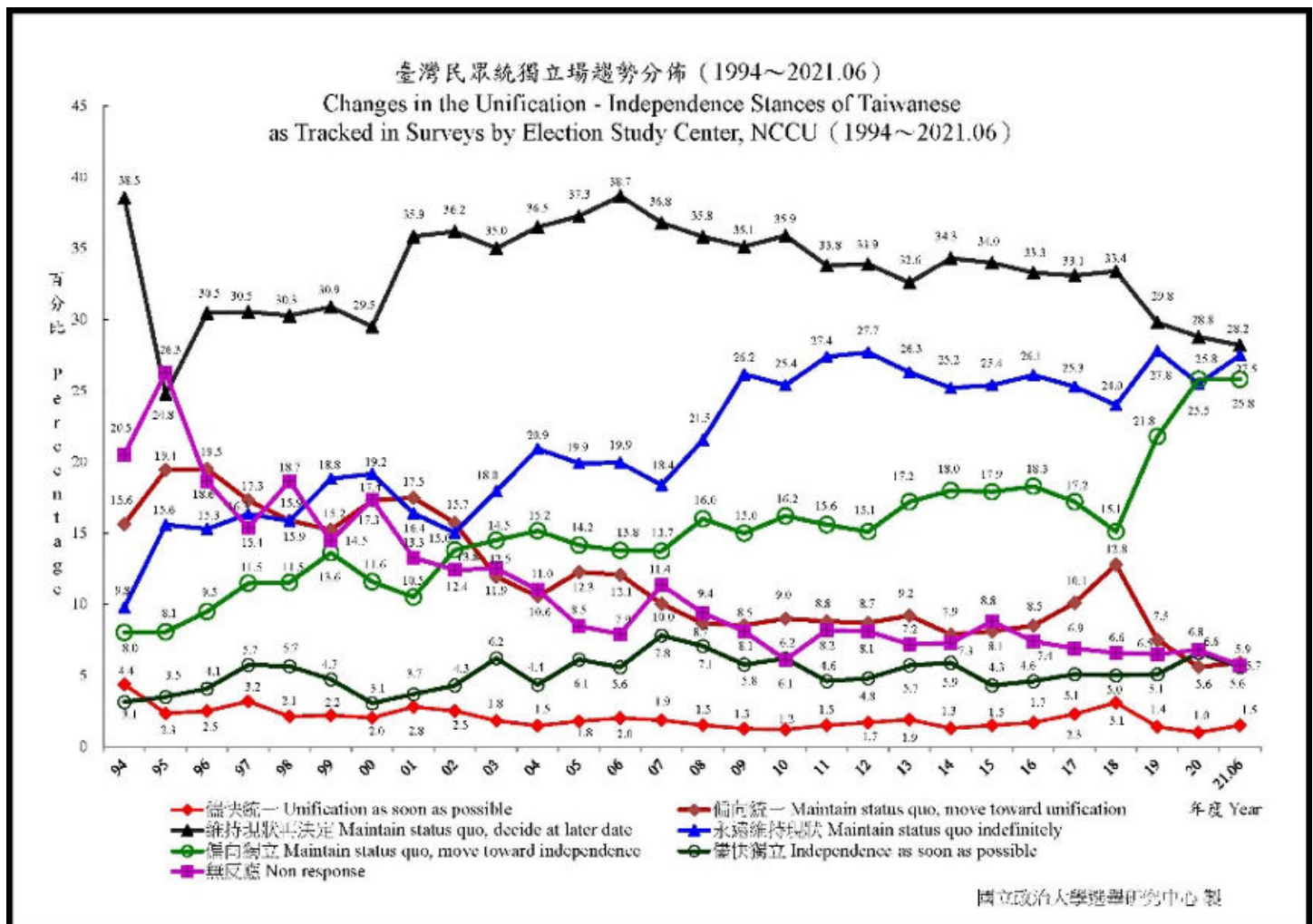


Image: Poll on Changes in the Unification-Independence Stances of Taiwanese (1994-2021.06). (Source: [National Chengchi University's Election Study Center](#))

gives the respondents the option to decide whether they would prefer the status quo, with four amplifying options: (1) decide Taiwan's status later; (2) maintain the status quo indefinitely; (3) move towards independence; or (4) move towards unification. From these choices, there are four observable directions in the public's preference for the status quo that bear highlighting. Since 2016 to 2021, beginning with the year that President Tsai Ing-wen was elected into office, the percentages among people who prefer the status quo have changed as follows:

1. Those who would prefer to "decide later" decreased from 33.3 percent to 28.2 percent;
2. Those preferring to move towards independence increased from 18.3 percent to 25.8 percent (most notably, the percentage dropped from 2016 to 2018 but then spiked considerably from 15.1 in 2018 to 25.8);
3. Those who would like to move towards unification dropped from 8.5 percent to 5.9 percent;
4. And those preferring to maintain the status quo indefinitely remained at relatively the same level, rising from 26.1 percent to 27.5 percent.

The shifts in the population's particular preferences regarding the status quo are obviously affected by developments in cross-strait relations. Since 2016, cross-strait relations have deteriorated significantly as Beijing resumed its diplomatic offensive to isolate Taiwan, and significantly ramped up its coercive pressure campaign in the military, political, and economic domains. Beijing and [some observers](#) attribute this decline in relations to Tsai's unwillingness to endorse by name the so-called "1992 Consensus" (九二共識) and to express, in Beijing's view, a credible commitment to the "One-China Principle" (一中原則). [Others have noted](#), however, that Tsai's position as spelled out in her 2016 inauguration speech and restrained actions since taking office reflect a type of "One-China Policy" (一中政策). But even such explanations fail to grasp the full picture of the subtle shifts in public opinion within Taiwan and largely ignore the impact of external events—most notably, how the ongoing crisis in Hong Kong is shaping how Taiwanese people see their potential future with the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The most noticeable shift from the latest NCCU poll has been the significant increase since 2018 in the percentage of people who prefer the status quo now, but want to move towards independence later: from 15.1 percent to 25.8 percent in 2021. This spike, which started in 2018, coincides with growing protests in Hong Kong and Beijing's heavy-handed crackdown, as well as Beijing's increasing military coercion directed at Taiwan. The demonstration effects are in plain view and the connection has been clearly drawn by senior officials in the United States as well. In response to a question from Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) concerning a hypothetical change in US policy towards adopting an explicit commitment to defend Taiwan, and whether it might precipitate further separation from China, the Biden Administration's Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines told the [Senate Armed Services Committee](#) in late April: "I would say that already Taiwan is hardening to some extent towards independence as they're watching, essentially, what happened in Hong Kong, and I think that is an increasing challenge."

According to [polling data](#) released by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), which is Taiwan's cabinet-level government agency in charge of implementing cross-strait policies, public opinion polling on Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping's speech celebrating the centenary of the Party's establishment found that a majority of the population expressed disapproval of China's approach to Hong Kong and Taiwan.

### Conclusion

While a move towards unification appears farther out of reach than perhaps at any point in the last 40 years, a sudden shift towards independence is also equally unlikely in the near to medium term. Indeed, a dramatic shift in any direction is very unlikely at this point, even if local and national elections move the country incrementally in a direction that may either be closer or further from the goals of the parties involved. There are no solid indicators that a radical change would take place, even if current Vice President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) became the DPP candidate for president in the 2024 election and won. The [latest NCCU poll](#) shows that an overwhelming 87.4 percent of respondents continue to support maintaining some form of the current status quo across the Taiwan Strait, with



only small fractions of the population preferring to immediately declare independence or unification. The candidates who will run in the 2024 election will need to keep this in mind when formulating campaign platforms and policies.

To be sure, however, demographic changes within Taiwan and increasingly hardened views towards China will make it more difficult for the opposition Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) to return to its traditional and more conciliatory approach to China. Further, actions that will likely be taken by Beijing will make a return to the 2008-2016 period even harder as the CCP uses more sticks in its attempt to rein in Taipei. As noted in the [2021 Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community](#) released by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence:

*“Beijing will press Taiwan authorities to move toward unification and will condemn what it views as increased US-Taiwan engagement. We expect that friction will grow as Beijing steps up attempts to portray Taipei as internationally isolated and dependent on the mainland for economic prosperity, and as China continues to increase military activity around the island.”*

In 2021, the percentage of respondents in Taiwan who prefer independence as soon as possible stands only at [5.6 percent](#) of the population (the same as it was in 1997), whereas those preferring unification as soon as possible stand at [1.5 percent](#). Barring major policy changes in Beijing and Washington over the legal status of Taiwan, these indicators are unlikely to change drastically in the near term—even if the debate over “strategic ambiguity” moves clearly in favor of clarity. This is in part because strategic clarity does not require taking a position on Taiwan’s legal status—it only indicates that if military force were used to change the status quo, then Washington would respond. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, public opinion in Taiwan will remain an important bulwark against any unilateral radical changes.

**The main point:** The [latest NCCU poll](#) shows that an overwhelming 87.4 percent of Taiwanese continue to support maintaining some form of the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. These indicators are unlikely to change drastically in the near term—even if the

debate over “strategic ambiguity” in the United States moves clearly in favor of clarity.

\*\*\*

## Taiwan’s Haiti Ties in Spotlight after President Moïse’s Assassination

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

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

On July 8, a group of armed men broke into [Taiwan’s embassy](#) in Haiti following the assassination of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in his residence in Port-Au-Prince. After the security breach, Taiwan’s embassy granted Haitian police access to its premises to conduct an investigation, and the police detained [11 suspects](#) who were sheltering inside. It is unclear why the armed men entered [Taiwan’s embassy](#), which sat empty as embassy staff were working from home. Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) condemned the “[cruel and barbaric](#)” assassination of the Haitian president, while [President Tsai Ing-wen](#) (蔡英文) tweeted that Taiwan “stand[s] together with our ally Haiti in this difficult time.”

The latest political turmoil in Haiti has put a spotlight on Taipei’s relations with the politically unstable Caribbean country. Despite [concerns](#) that Beijing might take advantage of the current instability to build its presence in Haiti, Taiwan’s government, which has a history of bolstering its ties with Port-au-Prince throughout several political crises, said relations with its long-standing ally remain [stable](#). While Taiwan has diplomatic reasons for assisting its Caribbean ally, there is concern that foreign assistance and intervention in Haiti may further weaken Port-au-Prince’s [governance capabilities](#).

### Two Diplomatic Allies Fending Off China

Haiti is one of Taiwan’s remaining [15 diplomatic allies](#) and the most populous among Taipei’s [four diplomatic allies](#) in the Caribbean (the others being Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). This year marks the [65<sup>th</sup> anniversary](#) of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of China (ROC) and Haiti in 1956. Speaking on the

65<sup>th</sup> anniversary on April 25—only a few months before his assassination—President Moïse said bilateral cooperation was “[never shaken](#).” Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Joseph Wu (吳釗燮) said that Taiwan has been deeply involved in Haiti’s development and thanked Port-au-Prince for its support of Taiwan’s efforts to carve out more international space. [1] The Haitian government has voiced support for Taiwan’s participation in the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#), the [International Civil Aviation Organization](#), and the [World Health Assembly](#).



Image: A file photo of Taiwan’s embassy in Port-au-Prince. (Source: [CNA](#))

Over the past several decades, China has been unsuccessful in persuading Haiti to establish diplomatic ties and sever relations with Taiwan. Notably, [the Dominican Republic](#), which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, switched diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in April 2018, ending more than 75 years of diplomatic ties. The Dominican Republic was motivated by the prospect of [increased trade benefits](#) with China. By contrast, Haiti’s top trade partners are [the Dominican Republic and the United States](#).

Furthermore, the political history of Haiti, a former

French colony that gained independence in [1804](#), is marked by [foreign domination](#). The frequent political and military interference by [the United States](#), as well as US support and opposition to individual Haitian leaders, made Port-au-Prince subject to significant external pressure from Washington. After Beijing passed a national security law for Hong Kong in June 2020, the [Moïse Administration](#) joined the United States and other Western countries in raising concerns about the impact of this law on rights and freedoms in Hong Kong. These factors may explain why Port-au-Prince has not succumbed to Beijing’s pressure to terminate ties with Taipei.

In the 1990s, China used its permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council to punish Haiti over its ties with Taiwan. In 1996, China threatened to veto an extension of the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, purportedly after Taiwan’s Vice President Li Yuan-tsu (李元簇) attended Haiti President René Prével’s inauguration. [2] Taiwan’s Ambassador to Haiti Yang Cheng-ta (楊承達) asserted in 2005 that China was angered by plans for Haiti’s interim President Boniface Alexandre to visit Taiwan, and thus aimed to reduce the mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission to Haiti “as an excuse to cause problems.” [3] Yang said, “The People’s Republic of China has been trying to obstruct relations between Taiwan and Haiti for a long time.” [4]

Paradoxically, while China has threatened to block extensions of various UN peacekeeping missions to Haiti in order to exert pressure on Taiwan-Haiti ties, it has also highlighted its troop contributions to these UN missions to boost its image in the Caribbean country. After an armed rebellion ousted Haiti’s first democratically elected president [Jean-Bertrand Aristide](#) in 2004, China sent 125 riot police as part of a UN peacekeeping mission to Haiti, marking the first Chinese peacekeeping presence in the Western Hemisphere. [5] “China’s active involvement in peacekeeping missions of the United Nations, especially in Haiti which has not set up a diplomatic relationship with China, fully exhibits a peace-loving and responsible image of the country,” said Chinese Vice Minister of Public Security Meng Hongwei (孟宏偉) in 2004. [6] Beijing later [withdrew](#) its police unit after a devastating earthquake struck Haiti in January 2010.

During episodes of political upheaval in Haiti, Taipei

has reaffirmed its ties with Port-au-Prince in order to stave off a potential Chinese diplomatic offensive towards the Caribbean nation. During worsening political violence in Haiti in 2004, Taiwan evacuated its agricultural missions from the country; however, Taipei did not repatriate its ambassador, Hsieh Hsin-ping (謝新平), out of concern that Beijing might take advantage of Haiti's internal turmoil to seize Taipei's diplomatic ally. [7]

More recently, Beijing has sought to step up its charm offensive through [offers](#) of financial assistance and the financing of infrastructure projects in Haiti. In 2017, the Southwest Municipal Engineering and Design Research Institute of China (中國市政工程西南設計研究總院有限公司) signed a [USD \\$30 billion](#) agreement with a Haitian company to invest in several infrastructure projects, including an electricity-generating power plant, a new city hall, apartment complexes, and a railway from Port-au-Prince to the countryside.

A [Chinese commerce official](#) commented in 2019, after several ROC allies had switched diplomatic recognition to the PRC, that if Port-au-Prince adheres to the "One-China Principle" (一中原則) both sides could move to establish diplomatic relations and China could provide interest-free loans and concessional loans to Haiti. In response to these Chinese aid pledges, Taiwan's [Foreign Ministry](#) responded that it is focused on providing foreign assistance that actually benefits the Haitian people.

### ***Taiwanese Assistance to Haiti***

Haiti is the [poorest country](#) in the Western Hemisphere, battered by chronic [political instability](#), institutional weakness, [poor governance capabilities](#), [natural disasters](#)—and now the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Haiti is also a country steeped in debt and has been borrowing money from [Taiwan](#) for several decades to finance its national development. In fact, Haiti's two main foreign creditors are [Venezuela and Taiwan](#), in addition to several [multilateral creditors](#) including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Taiwanese financial institutions that have provided loans to Haiti include the [Land Bank of Taiwan](#) (臺灣土地銀行).

Following a powerful earthquake that hit Haiti in early

2010, the international community, including the [IMF](#) and [IDB](#), moved to cancel much of [Haiti's debt](#). France's then Finance Minister [Christine Lagarde](#) asked all Paris Club members (mostly Western industrialized nations), as well as non-member Taiwan, to forgive Haiti's debt. President [Ma Ying-jeou](#) (馬英九) did not agree to cancel the debt, but asked MOFA to draw up a [debt restructuring plan](#) to help alleviate Port-au-Prince's financial burden. [Foreign Minister Timothy Yang](#) (楊進添) said that MOFA would postpone the request for Haiti to repay the principal on the commercial loan so that Port-au-Prince could focus on disaster reconstruction. In addition to deferring loan payments, Taipei sent a [search and rescue team](#) to Haiti to assist with disaster relief in the wake of the 2010 earthquake.

Despite the Haitian government's apparent inability to repay its debts to Taiwan, estimated to be around [USD \\$88 million](#), Taipei has continued to offer loans to Haiti. In January 2019, Haiti signed a [USD \\$150 million](#) concessional loan from Taiwan for electrical projects. Taipei said this loan to Haiti was aimed at building [power grids](#) in remote, rural areas, and at creating [business opportunities](#) for Taiwanese companies. Taiwan's [Overseas Engineering and Construction Corporation](#) (OECC, 海外工程公司), which has completed [73](#) major engineering projects in Haiti [over the past 20 years](#), is overseeing the electricity project that runs from Bois-Neuf in Artibonite to Léogâne. The Taiwanese government decided to give Port-au-Prince a [commercial loan](#) for the electricity project, instead of providing direct financial assistance, perhaps in consideration of [Taiwanese public opinion](#) that did not support direct financing. Yet, whether Haiti can even pay off this and other loans is uncertain. At the end of 2019, Taiwan held [USD \\$70.4 million](#) in Haiti's external debt, according to an IMF report released in April 2021.

### ***Is Foreign Assistance Hurting Haiti?***

President [Tsai](#) has said that Taiwan is a willing participant in Haiti's national development and that both sides have [cooperated](#) on public health, agriculture, and infrastructure projects. Despite a constant inflow of [international aid and assistance](#) for development and stabilization programs, Port-au-Prince has never learned [good governance](#) and has failed to provide fundamental [public services](#) for its people. Therefore,



there is a need to re-evaluate whether foreign assistance programs to Haiti, including that of Taiwan, might actually be perpetuating the country's dependency on external support—and perhaps even fostering corruption—instead of contributing to [institutional strength](#), capacity, and resiliency. Foreign assistance might actually diminish incentives for the Haitian government to implement [political and economic reforms](#) and improve good governance capabilities. On the surface, Taipei's strategy of utilizing loan packages to shore up its ties with Port-au-Prince in the face of Chinese pressure appears to be contributing to Haiti's development; however, it is also leaving Haiti in greater debt.

**The main point:** Taiwan's priority is to safeguard its diplomatic relations with Haiti from Chinese pressure. However, Taipei's financial assistance to its longstanding ally may be compounding Port-au-Prince's governance issues.

[1] "Taiwan, Haiti Celebrate 65 years of Diplomatic Relations," *Thai News Service*, April 27, 2021, retrieved in Nexis Uni.

[2] "Seeking to Counter Chinese, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Visits Haiti," *Associated Press International*, August 07, 1996, retrieved in Nexis Uni.

[3] "Taiwan Accuses China of Trying to Shorten UN Mandate in Haiti to Damage Diplomatic Relations," *Associated Press International*, May 31, 2005, retrieved in Nexis Uni.

[4] Ibid.

[5] "China to Send Riot Police on Peacekeeping Duty to Taiwan-ally Haiti," *Agence France Presse*, June 5, 2004, retrieved in Nexis Uni.

[6] Ibid.

[7] "Taiwan evacua sus misiones agrícolas en Haití ante disturbios" ("Taiwan Evacuates its Agricultural Missions Amid Unrest"), *Spanish Newswire Services*, February 16, 2004, retrieved in Nexis Uni.

\*\*\*

## Video Warns Japan of Nuclear Strike over Taiwan Dispute: Policy Shift, or Mere Bluster?

By: J. Michael Cole

*J. Michael Cole is a senior non-resident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.*

On July 11, a strange [video](#) surfaced on Chinese social media [warning](#) that China would abandon its nuclear no-first-use (NFU, 不率先使用) policy if Japan ever attempted to defend Taiwan against the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Four days later, after being reposted by various Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials, including the Baoji Municipal Committee's Bytedance iXigua (西瓜视频) video app account, and receiving millions of views, both the original video and an [extended version](#) were taken down.

China's NFU declaration [states](#) that "at no time and under no circumstances would China be the first to use nuclear weapons." However, this incident has left analysts wondering whether Beijing has abandoned its NFU policy amid a rapidly changing geopolitical context. As the narration makes clear:

*"In 1964, when our first atomic bomb was successfully detonated, we promised the world that we would not use atomic weapons against non-nuclear countries, and we would not be the first to use them [...] Nearly 60 years have passed. Now the international situation has changed dramatically. Our country is in the midst of a major change. And all political policies, tactics and strategies must be adjusted to protect the peaceful rise of our country [...] It is necessary to make limited adjustments to our nuclear policy."*

The video appeared on the somewhat obscure "[Wisdom & Strategies for 6 Armies](#)" (六军韬略) online military channel, which is [believed](#) to be either affiliated with the PLA or to have strong connections with it. Programming for this channel started in November 2020.

Although any sign that a country may have abandoned its longstanding nuclear NFU policy is undoubtedly alarming, it should be noted that [there has been no official confirmation](#) on the part of the PLA or the Cen

中共軍事頻道威脅對日本實施連續核打擊，直到日本第二次無條件投降。



中共軍事頻道威脅對日本實施連續核打擊，直到日本第二次無條件投降。



*Image: Still images from a video posted to the semi-official “Wisdom and Strategies for Six Armies” website on July 11, which threatened nuclear war against Japan in the event that it intervened in a Taiwan Strait conflict. (Source: [Twitter](#))*

tral Military Commission (CMC, 中央軍事委員會) to this effect. The sharing of such material by CCP officials also falls short of a statement of official policy. What remains to be determined is whether the production and sharing of the video was the product of individuals and agencies that acted independently—perhaps to vent out frustrations, or as an outlet for their ultranationalist sentiments—or if it was indeed sanctioned by the upper echelons of the CMC, the PLA, and the CCP.

### ***Deterrence and Anger***

If the video and its spread online received the blessing of senior decision makers within the Chinese military apparatus, there is a good chance that this represented an attempt, albeit a very crude one, to increase Chinese deterrence against greater involvement by Japan in the Taiwan Strait, which Beijing insists is an “internal matter.” Nevertheless, the fact that it was taken down after the post began receiving attention abroad suggests that the principal target audience was a domestic one.

The timing of the video certainly suggests that it was released in response to signs of a shifting policy in Tokyo, which has grown more vocal in its support for Taiwan and insistence on the need for stability in the Taiwan Strait, as demonstrated by several recent high-level statements. Chief among those were the April 16 [Joint Statement by US President Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Suga](#); the June 9 statement issuing from the [Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defense Ministerial](#)

[Consultations](#); State Minister of Defense Yasuhide Nakayama’s [remarks](#) during an online forum hosted by the Hudson Institute on June 28; and the [affirmation](#) by Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso on July 6 that Japan would join the US in defending Taiwan if the latter were attacked by China. Such developments suggest a policy reorientation by Japan and a departure from a more careful balancing strategy toward China. This was underscored in Japan’s [2021 Defense White Paper](#), released in mid-July, which emphasizes the sense of crisis in the Taiwan Strait and the importance of Taiwan for Japan’s national security.

In addition to these statements of intent, Japan’s provision of millions of COVID-19 vaccines to Taiwan—amid efforts by Beijing to complicate Taipei’s response to a domestic outbreak—has also demonstrated a willingness to translate rhetorical support for Taiwan into concrete action. This was especially galling for the CCP, as the first of three deliveries of vaccines to Taiwan occurred on [June 4](#), a rather touchy date for the Chinese regime.

Beijing’s anger also likely stems from other unfavorable developments in recent months, including the [G7](#) and [NATO](#) communiqués in June, as well as greater assertiveness on the part of the US, with the unprecedented (and in Beijing’s view, “[provocative](#)”) landings of a [USAF C-17 Globemaster III](#) at Taipei International Airport (Songshan) on June 6 and a [USAF C-146A Wolfhound](#) on July 15.



Unable to take on, and to deter, a large segment of the international community, China instead appears to be resorting to intimidation against a select group of countries. Although the video was in Chinese only (which again suggests that this was not officially sanctioned, as a nuclear policy shift would necessitate versions in languages that are understood by the international community), the producers must have known that it would eventually catch the attention of the international community and be translated into other languages. Besides Taiwan itself, this starts with the one country that, for historical reasons, strikes a most sensitive chord with the Chinese regime and much of the Chinese population in general: Japan. It bears mentioning that Japan has perhaps the strongest rationale for seeking stability in the Taiwan Strait—and besides the US, the most formidable capabilities to intervene in a conflict over Taiwan. Such intimidation likely aims to derail the current intersection of US and Japanese interests over Taiwan, a development that, should it result in joint action, would greatly complicate Chinese ambitions regarding Taiwan by substantially augmenting the latter's ability to deter the PLA.

Another reason to doubt that the video constitutes a true expression of a shift in Beijing's NFU policy is the fact that a nuclear attack against Japan, a non-nuclear state, would—just as a conventional attack—trigger the [Japan-US Security Treaty](#). A nuclear strike, however, would be a far more severe act of war against Japan and one that would prompt a devastating—and possibly nuclear—response by the US. Knowing this, and cognizant of the effects that nuclear war with the US would have on China, it is unlikely that Beijing, assuming that it continues to operate along “rational” lines, has decided to embark on such a course of action. Therefore, the likeliest explanation for the video and its sharing by a number of CCP officials is that this was intended as a signal of deterrence mixed with historical grievances and ultranationalism.

### **Policy Shift**

However unlikely it may appear at the moment, we nevertheless cannot completely discount the possibility that China, seeing a geopolitical environment that is increasingly stacked against it, is in fact contemplating a departure from its longstanding NFU policy. Such a shift could be the result of despair within the CCP

or the product of hawkish factions prevailing against more conventional thinkers in the CMC, the PLA and the CCP. For example, this could result should the CCP regard the “loss” of Taiwan as an existential threat to the party, which has made the annexation of the island a cornerstone of its policy. If the situation indeed risks triggering “irrational” decision making in Beijing, whereby the leadership [no longer calculates costs versus benefits along expected lines or is willing to absorb tactical losses for strategic gain](#), then it is essential that we make the necessary intellectual adjustments to prepare to confront such scenarios.

The most alarming aspect of such a policy shift in Beijing would be the greatly elevated risks of miscalculation, which could now result in nuclear exchanges. Firstly, by elevating the potential for a nuclear first strike against one of its opponents, China would create a rationale for Japan to embark on its own nuclear program, which would in turn create a vicious circle and spark a nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia. The security dilemma posed by a nuclear Japan—or one that bolsters its conventional long-range strike capabilities in response to a Chinese nuclear threat—would compel Beijing to further develop its nuclear arsenal. Secondly, by adding a nuclear component to the Taiwan Strait, China would exacerbate the risks of miscalculation, which could potentially result in nuclear exchanges. By elevating the contest over Taiwan to the nuclear level (even if secretly the CMC retained a NFU policy), China would increase its own insecurities over the potential use of nuclear weapons by other states. Most troubling is the potential for the PLA to misconstrue an incoming threat. As Christopher P. Twomey warns in [China's Strategic Arsenal](#):

*“Some evidence suggests that China might consider moving to a launch-on-warning or launch-on-threat posture. This raises some important questions: How would such warning be assessed? What capabilities do the Chinese have to differentiate between a nuclear and nonnuclear attack?”*

Unless Beijing makes a clear effort to dispel the possibility that it may be overturning its NFU policy, such belligerence via the elevation of the threat against other potential players in a Taiwan Strait contingency risks creating an escalatory spiral. The [recent discovery](#)

that China is building as many as 120 new nuclear silos to bolster its nuclear strike capability is not sending a reassuring signal to the international community. If Beijing's new plan is indeed to nuclearize the Taiwan Strait, then the risks of error and a resulting devastating conflagration will have become all the more serious.

**The main point:** A new video posted on a semi-official Chinese military channel has warned that Beijing could abandon its nuclear no-first use policy and strike Japan should Tokyo decide to intervene on Taiwan's side in a Taiwan Strait contingency. Regardless of whether this is mere ultranationalist bluster, deterrence, or an actual policy shift, this kind of signaling contributes to greater instability and uncertainty in the region.

\*\*\*

## Beijing Blames Taiwan Organizations for Unrest in Hong Kong

By: John Dotson

*John Dotson is the deputy director of the Global Taiwan Institute and associate editor of the Global Taiwan Brief.*

In mid-May, a series of events occurred in quick succession that either [closed or severely curtailed operations](#) by the representative offices maintained by Taiwan in Hong Kong and Macao, and vice versa. The most proximate and immediate reason for the *de facto* closure of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Hong Kong (TECO, 台北經濟文化辦事處 [香港辦事處]) was the denial of visa renewals for TECO staffers after they refused to sign a statement in support of the "One-China Principle" (一中原則), as insisted upon by officials of the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, this controversy, which provided a pretext for Beijing and the Hong Kong city administration to force out most of Taiwan's consular officials, has overshadowed other disputes between Taiwan and the PRC that could have played equally significant if not more substantive factors in the decision to effectively close these representative offices.

These actions are reflective of Beijing's growing paranoia regarding the allegedly subversive role played by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs),

as well as its suspicions that Taiwan "separatists" are acting in tandem with like-minded opposition elements in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). Statements made by PRC government agencies and state press outlets throughout the spring and summer have accused both international NGOs—many of which operate branches in Taiwan—as well as Taiwan government organizations of acting as primary "black hands" (黑手) responsible for stirring up unrest in the HKSAR.

### *The CCP's Paranoia Regarding International NGOs in Hong Kong*

The PRC's ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has long fostered a paranoid view of NGOs—particularly international NGOs—for their alleged roles in fomenting "color revolutions" (顏色革命) around the world. The CCP's suspicions of NGOs have resulted in measures such as the "[Law of the People's Republic of China \(PRC\) on Administration over the Activities of Overseas Non-Government Organizations Within China PRC](#)" (中華人民共和國境外非政府組織境內活動管理法) officially implemented in 2017, part of a larger effort under Xi Jinping (習近平) to crack down on civil society groups in the PRC. From the onset of major protests in the HKSAR in 2019, PRC state press outlets (see examples [here](#) and [here](#)) have accused both international and local NGOs—including Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, as well as international labor organizations such as the US-based Solidarity Center—of acting as the unseen puppet masters behind the unrest.

The CCP's conspiracy theories regarding international NGOs were encapsulated in a 2019 propaganda film produced by *Xinhua*, the PRC's state news agency, titled "[Some Foreign NGOs Play a Sinister Role in Hong Kong Unrest](#)." The five-minute film, produced in English and distributed via Twitter and YouTube, alleged that the activities of international NGOs—in particular, "the notorious National Endowment for Democracy [NED] in the United States"—were a primary factor underlying the opposition movement and protests in Hong Kong. The film asserted that "NGOs have been active in providing support for those creating social unrest in Hong Kong," and that "about 100 local Hong Kong NGOs and over 100 overseas NGOs have been shown to be involved in fomenting the city's current unrest." Of these, the "NED is well known for its meddling in the

internal affairs and political elections of numerous foreign countries [...] NED supplies funds and training to selected groups to support the so-called ‘democratic’ movements.” Other allegedly subversive international NGOs identified in the film included the Open Society Foundation, funded by “American financial predator” George Soros; the International Bar Association; and UN Watch and the Human Rights Foundation, which “have provided platforms for Hong Kong separatists to spread their inflammatory rhetoric.”

This video also showed the PRC propaganda emphasis on elevating voices from the marginalized fringes of the pro-unification spectrum of Taiwan politics. The video included a clip of National Taiwan University Professor Chang Ya-chung (張亞中)—the [director of the Sun Yat-Sen School](#) (孫文學校), and longshot aspirant for the [2020 Kuomintang \(KMT\) presidential nomination](#) and [2021 KMT chairmanship](#)—speaking at a Hong Kong forum titled “NGOs and Color Revolutions” (NGO 與顏色革命). Chang, echoing PRC narratives, [asserted](#) that “I think many NGOs are very good, and well-intentioned. [...] However, some countries, for the sake of their national interests, make use of NGOs to pursue their vainly hoped-for political goals.”

Institute for International Affairs, the International Republican Institute, Human Rights Watch and Freedom House [...] these NGOs have supported anti-China plotters [...] aiding and abetting them in extreme violent criminal acts and inciting ‘Hong Kong independence’ separatist activities. They are much to blame for the chaos in Hong Kong.”

### *The Increasing Presence of International NGOs in Taiwan*

In contrast with Beijing’s suspicions, Taiwan’s government has taken measures in recent years to [encourage international NGOs to establish branches in Taiwan](#). Furthermore, the PRC’s increasingly harsh measures in 2020-2021 to either suppress or expel international NGOs and media organizations have led an increasing number of such organizations to [relocate to Taiwan](#). This has included Chinese dissident organizations such as the New School for Democracy (華人民主書院), a pro-democracy organization founded in 2011 by Wang Dan (王丹), one of the prominent student leaders of the 1989 Tiananmen protest movement. In September 2020, citing “concern [...] about the safety of our staff,” the organization closed its Hong Kong office and announced plans to [consolidate in Taiwan](#).



Image: Still images from a 2019 Xinhua-produced propaganda film, posted to Twitter and Youtube, which blamed foreign NGOs for inciting unrest in Hong Kong. (Source: [Xinhua Twitter](#))

In December 2019, a foreign ministry spokesperson [announced](#) that the PRC was imposing “sanctions on NGOs that played an egregious role in the recent disturbance[s] [...] including [NED], the National Democratic

Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) announced plans to open offices in Taiwan. These



US-based NGOs—which nominally are loosely affiliated with America’s two major political parties, but act as largely independent institutions—perform work related to political party and civil society building throughout the world, particularly in emerging democracies. [NDI’s announcement](#) held up “Taiwan’s democracy [as] a model for the Asia-Pacific region and the world,” and stated that NDI’s new office would “strengthen and expand partnerships with Taiwan’s civic tech community, legislature, and government officials.” Similarly, [IRI’s announcement](#) praised Taiwan as “a place that embodies the commitment to democratic values,” and asserted that “as the CCP becomes more aggressive in violating the global rules-based order, now is the time for all democracies—including the United States—to invest in strengthening ties with Taiwan.”

PRC state press [criticized](#) the establishment of the NDI and IRI offices as “a further infiltration of US political forces in the island of Taiwan [...] NDI and IRI are notorious for churning out anti-China propaganda and meddling in other countries’ internal affairs [...] these NGOs will do nothing but disrupt cross-Straits exchanges, through funding local so-called ‘think tanks’ to create more rumors targeting the Chinese mainland while training young people to fight for the ‘independence’ of Taiwan.” On July 23, in response to a “business advisory” for Hong Kong and sanctions against HKSAR officials announced by US federal agencies, the PRC [announced retaliatory sanctions](#) against 7 persons or organizations—including DoYun Kim, program assistant for Asia at NDI, and Adam King, associate director for Asia at IRI.

### ***Taiwan’s Creation of Organizations for Hong Kong Affairs—and Beijing’s Reaction***

In June 2020, in response to the passage of the “Hong Kong National Security Law” (香港國家安全法) and Beijing’s growing crackdown on the territory, Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC, 大陸委員會) [announced](#) the formation of a “Hong Kong Humanitarian Aid Project” (香港人道援助行動方案), which in turn would operate a “Taiwan-Hong Kong Office for Exchanges and Services” (台港服務交流辦公室). The inter-agency “Project,” to be operated under the official Taiwan-Hong Kong Economic and Cultural Co-Operation Council (財團法人臺港經濟文化合作策進會),

was intended to “provide friendly and streamlined services and basic care for Hong Kong citizens arriving in Taiwan in need of assistance, as well as for Hong Kong-based multinational companies and international corporations relocating to Taiwan.” MAC further asserted that “the Project fully demonstrates the determination and goodwill of the government to support the Hong Kong people in protecting their democracy, freedom, and human rights.”



*Image: Taiwan officials at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the “Taiwan-Hong Kong Office for Exchanges and Services” on July 1, 2020. (Image source: [BBC](#))*

The creation of these government coordination bodies appears to have dovetailed with, and magnified, the anxieties of Beijing and the HKSAR city administration regarding alleged subversion conducted by “hostile external forces.” Throughout the summer of 2021, PRC agencies and the CCP propaganda apparatus have conducted an expanding effort to identify Taiwan’s governing Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)—alongside the United States government—as the primary “black hands” fomenting “separatist” unrest in the HKSAR. Alongside the *de facto* downsizing of the TECO office in Hong Kong and the parallel closure of Hong Kong’s representative office in Taiwan, the HKSAR administration issued a [press release on May 21](#) that stated:

*“In recent years, Taiwan has grossly interfered in Hong Kong’s affairs on repeated occasions [...] Most notably, Taiwan has launched the so-called “Hong Kong Aid Project” and unilaterally established the so-called “Taiwan-Hong Kong Office for Exchanges and Services” [that] offer[ed] assistance to violent protesters and people who tried to shatter Hong Kong’s prosperity and stability.”*

Building on this, the PRC State Council Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO, 國務院臺灣事務辦公室) issued a [statement on June 21](#) that asserted “[The role of] Taiwan’s organizations [...] in incidents causing chaos in Hong Kong cannot be concealed. The DPP authorities have once again attacked and smeared ‘One Country Two Systems’ [and we] must expose the actions and political schemes of [their] organizations based in Hong Kong!” A subsequent TAO [statement on June 24](#), titled “Sternly Admonishing DPP Authorities to Immediately Withdraw from Involvement as Black Hands in Hong Kong Affairs,” accused the DPP of acting in collusion with *Apple Daily* (蘋果日報) publisher Jimmy Lai (黎智英) to “cause chaos in Hong Kong [and] plot for ‘independence.’”

### Conclusion

Although it is certainly not the only factor involved, Beijing’s suspicious attitude towards NGOs and “hostile foreign forces” likely played a significant role in the closure of the representative offices between Taiwan and Hong Kong (as well as Macao) in May 2021. The paranoid and blinkered—but almost certainly sincerely held—belief on the part of the senior CCP leadership that US and Taiwan-based organizations were involved in orchestrating the HKSAR opposition movement and the major protests of 2019-2020 provided a strong motivation for Beijing to shutter these offices. Both the closure of the representative offices, and the intensifying propaganda vilification of Taiwan-based NGOs and governmental organizations as “black hands” engaged in the funding and direction of “separatist” activities, are part and parcel of Beijing’s continuing efforts to suppress civil society in the HKSAR and further cut the territory off from linkages to Taiwan. These measures can only be expected to continue and intensify as the second half of 2021 unfolds.

**The main point:** The PRC government maintains a paranoid view of international NGOs, as well as their alleged roles in supporting the opposition movement and fomenting unrest in Hong Kong. Beijing’s suspicious attitude, and its assertions that Taiwan government organizations and the Democratic Progressive Party were involved in supporting these NGOs, likely played a contributing role in the May 2021 closure of Taiwan’s representative office in Hong Kong.

\*\*\*

## Language Diplomacy and Bilingual Ambitions in Taiwan

By: Isabel Eliassen

*Isabel Eliassen is a graduate of Western Kentucky University and a Spring 2021 GTI intern.*

In November 2020, Taiwan President [Tsai Ing-wen](#) (蔡英文) declared her goal to turn Taiwan into a bilingual country within 10 years. Tsai’s [“Bilingual Nation by 2030”](#) agenda is aimed at achieving a high degree of English proficiency among the Taiwanese public. Taipei’s bilingual ambitions are related to several of its diplomatic and economic goals. First, Taiwan hopes to attract more [foreign investment](#) and increase international trade opportunities. The government also sees [English](#) language capacity as a means to improve international cooperation and strengthen its ties with the global community. Taiwan’s promotion of English learning—coupled with the suggestion from [the American Institute in Taiwan](#) (AIT, 美國在台協會) that Taiwan could help replace China’s closing Confucius Institutes—could be an effective method of bolstering US-Taiwan cooperation on language instruction and exchanges.

### Bilingual Nation by 2030

Taiwan’s government has highlighted several specific goals in order to achieve national bilingualism. First, English will be used to teach [other non-language subjects](#) such as math. To teach in this format, teachers will need higher levels of English fluency and more diverse vocabulary, so the government is working to [organize teacher training programs](#). Second, the government aims to improve translations of relevant [government documents and websites](#) for foreigners and international businesses, helping to remove language barriers that could prevent some companies from establishing operations in Taiwan.

Since the announcement of the national bilingual policy, few updates have been reported by the national government. By contrast, some cities and counties in Taiwan—including [Taipei](#), [New Taipei](#), and [Pingtung](#)—have publicized their plans to enhance English-language education. These new programs generally focus

on [improving training](#) for Taiwanese teachers of English and [hiring native English speakers](#). However, the wide variety of strategies at the local level has complicated the national implementation of English learning. For instance, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) [stated](#) that English classes must be taught in at least one-third English to be considered bilingual, but many cities and counties [have not specified](#) what exactly a bilingual class entails and how it differs from current teaching methods.

### ***Challenges to Promoting English***

Systemic issues make English education in Taiwan a struggle. The largest discrepancy exists between the [government focus](#) on [communicative teaching](#) on the one hand, and the written exams required for entering high schools and universities [1] and those in the job market [2] on the other. Even [students](#) have noted these issues and agreed that a shift in focus from testing to communication and critical thinking would be beneficial. When discussing such a potential shift, Taiwan's former National Development Council Minister, Chen Mei-ling (陳美伶), said, "[Gone is the emphasis on exams](#)." However, universities still often require students to achieve certain scores on English tests in order to graduate, which may compel teachers to prioritize exam content over practicing effective communication. [3] Scholars have suggested that Japan's focus on testing will remain the biggest hindrance to reaching its English education goals until serious changes are made. [4] Taiwan has a similar [cultural focus on testing](#), and changing this will be more challenging than a simple shift in rhetorical focus toward communicative language teaching.

Moreover, some foreign commentators have expressed negative views of the bilingual policy. One argument is that, due to the rigid structure of the education system and the relative unimportance of English for most Taiwanese, "[bilingual by 2030 will of course fail](#)." Others have pointed out that true nationwide bilingualism would mean intensive language classes for [preschoolers as well as the elderly](#), a truly massive undertaking for the government to accomplish.

### ***Urban-Rural Divide***

There are also issues of equity in language education, especially given the disparities between urban and ru-

ral areas and between low-income and high-income families. To this end, Minister Chen [has suggested](#) that expanding internet access could help to overcome these divides in terms of language education. However, online English learning resources are not enough to resolve this discrepancy. The online education resources available to students in rural areas are on average [much less substantial](#) than those available to urban students. Rural students are also less likely to encounter foreigners or have access to movie theaters showing movies in English. [5] Furthermore, teachers in rural areas often have [limited access to training programs](#). The divide between the language abilities of low-income students versus high-income students is rooted in [similar issues](#) of access to resources and other forms of assistance. Not all students, for instance, are able to afford the test preparation offered at [cram schools](#), thus putting them at a disadvantage compared to more affluent peers. [6] This divide is likely to [widen](#) in coming years as English listening comprehension (emphasized much more in cram schools than public schools) becomes a focus in entrance exams. Although improving the overall quality of language education in public schools would generally help improve students' English proficiency, the government may want to consider policies that specifically aim to help underserved groups.

### ***Hiring English Language Teachers***

One area where the current English education policy does well—at least in name—is its focus on [training local teachers](#). While foreign teachers do offer some benefits to the classroom—[knowledge of Western culture](#) and fluency in spoken English, [7] for example—reliance on foreign teachers is not without drawbacks. Taiwan has [struggled to hire foreign teachers](#) in the past, and many foreign teachers arrive in Taiwan with [little language education training](#) or experience. They may also lack the Chinese-language skills needed to communicate with students. On the other hand, Taiwanese teachers [structure their classes](#) in a way familiar to their students, understand the [grammatical struggles](#) their students face, [share the same culture](#), and can communicate in Chinese. However, Taiwanese teachers themselves often [admit](#) their English language training is not always sufficient. Accordingly, better training for local teachers may be one step to-



wards improved language education.

Although deeper, systemic issues create the greatest challenges, short term problems exist as well. With Taiwan on a compressed timeline—hoping to achieve nationwide bilingualism in under 10 years—problems that set Taiwan back just one or two years must be acknowledged. In this regard, COVID-19 created a wealth of problems, particularly by complicating the already challenging process of securing foreign employees. As a result of the virus, travel restrictions, visa complications, and other logistical issues, hiring foreign teachers for language classes is harder than before, a dynamic which is [unlikely to change](#) for a few years. For instance, Pingtung County had to [stop hiring](#) foreign teachers in 2020. Initially, the county had hoped to hire enough English teachers to staff nearly 200 schools within two years, but with [only 25 foreign](#) teachers at 48 schools, this goal seems distant.



*Image: A still image from a promotional film for the Fulbright Taiwan English Teaching Assistant program, showing an American English teacher at work in an elementary school in Yilan (宜蘭) in northeast Taiwan. (Source: [Fulbright Taiwan ETA](#))*

Programs designed to include English in everyday life in Taiwan have been proposed as a means to contribute to an immersive environment, such as through new [English TV stations and other media outlets](#), but these may not succeed in the way the government imagines. While foreigners might appreciate [multi-lingual signs and websites](#), it is misleading to present these changes as contributing to the creation of an immersive environment in Taiwan. Linguistics research has found that [language immersion](#) is not a straightforward tool to use. [8] For instance, immersion alone

is often not an effective way for [most adults](#) to learn a second language. [9] Indeed, adults generally benefit from explicit instruction on a language's grammatical features. [10]

Some critics have suggested that Taiwan switch its approach to English education entirely, proposing, for instance, that Taiwan establish a [professional translation bureau](#). Companies could then [outsource](#) translation tasks and rely on quick, high-quality, professional translations rather than relying on internal workers who do not specialize in translation. Although such an approach would doubtless have its own problems, a well-established translation service could potentially help Taiwan achieve some of the more strategic aspects of its language policy goals, particularly those related to [international investment](#) and [competition](#).

In terms of English-language education, Singapore is often [cited](#) as an ideal example for Taiwan. However, the Southeast Asian city-state had its language environment irrevocably altered during its time as a [British colony](#). Government officials in Taiwan have [acknowledged](#) this historical difference but still consider the Singaporean model as the ultimate goal. One proposal recommends [authorizing English kindergarten](#) programs, which for now are private and not fully legal. Providing authorization could help [lower the cost](#) of such programs, making them available to a wider range of families, while also allowing for [better regulation](#) overall.

### ***Opportunities for US-Taiwan Collaboration***

Despite these struggles, there are areas for Taiwan to cooperate with the United States and other countries on language education as a form of education diplomacy. The US Fulbright program sends [about 145](#) English Teaching Assistants to Taiwan annually, one of the largest Fulbright programs in any country. By contrast, the United States has recently paused all [Fulbright and Peace Corps](#) programs in China and Hong Kong indefinitely. Fulbright also [sends Taiwanese teachers](#) to the United States to help teach Chinese language classes. For American students, learning Mandarin Chinese from Taiwanese teachers can help expose them to Taiwanese politics and other issues they might not otherwise learn from Chinese instructors. For Taiwan, this type of soft diplomacy is likely an important part of its

strategy to remain close to the United States.

With Mandarin Chinese becoming increasingly popular for Americans and other students to study, there are areas in which Taiwan could offer reciprocal language education opportunities. As Chinese language centers in Taiwan offer a noteworthy contribution to Taiwan's [economy](#), such efforts could yield both diplomatic and financial benefits. [The Language Flagship](#), a US government-funded initiative to help improve Americans' skills in critical languages, [added](#) a location at Taiwan's National Taiwan University in 2019. In the future, Taiwan may look to increase the reach of its language diplomacy beyond its borders. Because many US universities have recently [shut down](#) Chinese-funded Confucius Institutes on their campuses, Taiwan may be able to slip easily into those voids and fill similar demands. Some members of Congress have expressed [support](#) for this idea.

In December 2020 the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Washington, DC signed a [memorandum](#) regarding international education, emphasizing language education. The memorandum particularly [emphasizes](#) newer teaching methods such as content-based instruction and greater opportunities for teachers through programs such as Fulbright. This step towards closer cooperation between these two institutions could also be a way to address some of the extant education issues discussed above.

Taiwan is also looking to increase its education connections with Europe. A [new program](#) announced by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) aims to bring European students to Taiwanese universities to study in various fields, including Chinese language. [Some Taiwanese universities](#) are also planning programs to enable European students to assist with English programs. The MOFA [directly attributed](#) these plans to the 2030 bilingualism goal. More generally, Taiwanese universities are being encouraged to increase the number of [graduate degrees available in English](#) for both local and foreign students.

Although Taiwan's language education issues are complex and difficult to solve, approaching them realistically and with a unified national strategy will help Taiwan establish a successful language policy much more

quickly. Language education does provide some valuable opportunities for diplomacy, and Taiwan should continue to investigate such avenues. Nonetheless, revising the "bilingual by 2030" catchphrase to represent a more concrete, realistic goal could have a more positive impact in the long run.

**The main point:** Taiwan's "Bilingual Nation by 2030" policy, while an impressive goal, would benefit from better communication between levels of government and simpler, more immediate objectives.

[1] Peter Iori Kobayashi, "English in Taiwan," in Kingsley Bolton, Werner Botha, and Andy Kirkpatrick (eds.) *The Handbook of Asian Englishes* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2020):547-567. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118791882.ch23>

[2] Gareth Price, "English for all? Neoliberalism, globalization, and language policy in Taiwan," in *Language in Society* 43.5 (2014): 567-589. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/43904599?casa\\_token=dJxK9e5RRaYAAAAA:vm-lWQhkatT3b\\_oo93Gc1b5vuyPRvJ9c6bZd9SVM-XjVn-pNc94R1BoMeThyskeoCa8QkiS0pBdmCcLXPxk0JPQ-J4ZcpwZmwYvcE1KOSAz7JxPHERSKs8](https://www.jstor.org/stable/43904599?casa_token=dJxK9e5RRaYAAAAA:vm-lWQhkatT3b_oo93Gc1b5vuyPRvJ9c6bZd9SVM-XjVn-pNc94R1BoMeThyskeoCa8QkiS0pBdmCcLXPxk0JPQ-J4ZcpwZmwYvcE1KOSAz7JxPHERSKs8)

[3] See [1]

[4] Mitsuyo Sakamoto, "Moving towards effective English language teaching in Japan: Issues and challenges," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 33.4 (2012): 409-420. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01434632.2012.661437>

[5] See [1]

[6] Jihyeon Jeon and Yoonhee Choe, "Cram Schools and English Language Education in East Asian Contexts," *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (2018): 1-14. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0668>

[7] Fan-Wei Kung, "Reexamining the NS and NNS dichotomy in Taiwanese higher EFL education," *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher* 24.1 (2015): 27-34. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40299-013-0155-0>

[8] Claudia G. Cervantes-Soon et al, "Combating inequalities in two-way language immersion programs: Toward critical consciousness in bilingual ed-

ucation spaces,” *Review of Research in Education* 41.1 (2017): 403-427. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/0091732X17690120>

[9] William Littlewood and Baohua Yu, “First language and target language in the foreign language classroom,” *Language Teaching* 44.1 (2011): 64-77. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/language-teaching/article/abs/first-language-and-target-language-in-the-foreign-language-classroom/D8A726E9B0804DE9C09FC-D37E32C1EFA>

[10] Robert M. DeKeyser, “Age in learning and teaching grammar,” *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching* (2018): 1-6. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0106>

\*\*\*

## America’s “No First Use” Nuclear Doctrine Debate: Implications for the Taiwan Strait

By: Michael Mazza

*Michael Mazza is a senior non-resident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute, a visiting fellow with the American Enterprise Institute, and a nonresident fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.*

Writing in the last issue of the *Global Taiwan Brief*, I [argued](#) that Chinese nuclear strategy will be a key factor in shaping the likelihood and potential course of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait. I focused in particular on China’s “no first use” (NFU) policy—in which it pledges not to use nuclear weapons first—the content and fate of which will influence outcomes in significant ways. China, however, is not the only country debating NFU. The United States is also engaged in a similar debate, which has potential implications for the Taiwan Strait and the broader Indo-Pacific region.

In April of this year, Senator Elizabeth Warren and Representative Adam Smith [reintroduced](#) the No First Use Act, which they had previously put forward in early 2019. With a past (and potential future) presidential contender and the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee having thrown their weight behind a US embrace of “NFU,” the debate over doing so is likely to persist. The adoption of an NFU policy would mark a profound change for US nuclear strategy.

### The Case for “No First Use”

According to the joint Smith-Warren [press release](#), adopting “no first use” would benefit national security by:

- “Reducing the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding by an adversary during a crisis that could lead to nuclear use;
- “Strengthening our deterrence and increasing strategic stability by clarifying our declaratory policy;
- “Preserving the US second-strike capability to retaliate against any nuclear attack on the US or its allies.”

Aspects of these claims have some merit. If rivals and adversaries are reasonably confident that the United States has no intention of using nuclear weapons first in a conflict, they are less likely to misinterpret American actions; less likely to raise their own nuclear alert levels; and, especially in the case of countries with smaller arsenals, less likely to embrace “use it or lose it” logic. As a result, the prospects for nuclear escalation in a conflict could be significantly reduced. This would, of course, be a positive outcome, but a shift to NFU could have significant negative repercussions as well.

### American NFU and the Taiwan Strait

Despite the potential reduction in nuclear risk that would accompany a US shift to NFU, that shift could be dangerously destabilizing. In asserting that an American NFU policy would increase “strategic stability,” Warren and Smith perhaps mean that nuclear conflict would be less likely. The flip side of that coin, however, is that the risk of conventional conflict would go up.

The risk of nuclear escalation acts as an inhibitor for both the United States and its adversaries. Take away that inhibitor and the United States may be tempted to respond more assertively to relatively minor transgressions; and in Asia, China may be more tempted to opt for aggression in disputes with its neighbors. Indeed, an American NFU policy could significantly weaken Washington’s ability to deter China from using force against Taiwan. With reduced concern that the United States would resort to nuclear weapons in response to conventional attacks on US territory or in the



event that Chinese victory looked likely, Beijing would be more confident in launching an assault on Taiwan in the first place.

America's current nuclear strategy not only contributes to the deterrence of conventional conflict, but also may put guardrails on conflict when it does break out. Consider that Washington has successfully used that tool in the Taiwan Strait in the past, notably during the first and second Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s. During the first crisis, in particular, President Eisenhower explicitly threatened to use tactical nuclear weapons against China. Mao ordered a halt to the shelling of Taiwan's offshore islands two weeks later. During the second crisis, Soviet concerns over nuclear escalation had Khrushchev pleading with Mao to exercise restraint.

In a theoretical future scenario, having opted to invade or otherwise use force against Taiwan under circumstances in which the United States has adopted NFU, China may see less reason for caution in striking US bases on allied territory or on US territory itself in the event Washington decides to intervene on Taiwan's behalf. An NFU policy—especially if mandated by law, as Warren and Smith propose—would deny the use of credible nuclear signaling as a tool for Washington to discourage Beijing from crossing certain lines.

The theoretical result, then, is a war that might have been averted with a different nuclear strategy and one that will be far more violent (at the conventional level) than it would have been even had deterrence failed. Such a war is also one that is more likely to touch the US homeland directly. Chinese cyber operations with the potential to have strategic effect—such as attacks on critical infrastructure or the financial system—may be more difficult to deter under circumstances in which American nuclear weapons are used exclusively to deter adversary nuclear use. The same is true for more indiscriminate attacks on US space assets, including satellites used for navigation, telecommunications, or weather forecasting.

It is, of course, possible to deter Chinese conventional, space, and cyber attacks in the midst of conflict with means besides nuclear weapons, but an NFU policy might hamstring Washington's capacity to do so. The [2018 Nuclear Posture Review](#) (NPR) put it this way:

"Non-nuclear forces also play essential deterrence roles. Alone, however, they do not provide comparable deterrence effects, as reflected by the periodic and catastrophic failures of conventional deterrence to prevent Great Power wars throughout history." It is, rather, the combined use of nuclear and non-nuclear forces that allow the United States to generate unique, robust deterrent effects. Again, according to the NPR:

*"US deterrence strategy has always integrated multiple instruments of national power to deter nuclear and non-nuclear attack. Integrating and exercising all instruments of power has become increasingly important as potential adversaries integrate their military capabilities, expanding the range of potential challenges to be deterred. This is particularly true of threats from potential adversaries of limited nuclear escalation and non-nuclear strategic attack."*

Put simply, in adopting an NFU policy, the United States could make a Taiwan Strait conflict more likely, more violent, and more likely to involve (non-nuclear) attacks on the American homeland. This is presumably not the outcome that proponents of NFU have in mind.

### ***Courting Proliferation***

In the wake of an American shift to NFU, Taiwan might also find itself living in a region characterized by substantial proliferation pressures. Congressman Adam Smith [argues](#) that embracing NFU "would renew US leadership on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament," but American allies in Asia might not care much about American moral leadership if the price Washington pays for assuming that mantle is to undercut the security of its closest partners.

As noted above, the Warren-Smith press release indicated that their No First Use Act would enhance national security by "preserving the US second-strike capability to retaliate against any nuclear attack on the US or its allies." But for those allies that count on US extended deterrence, this is hardly reassuring. The proposed act has only one section, and that section comprises a single sentence: "It is the policy of the United States to not use nuclear weapons first." Since they were already seeking to encroach on executive branch authority with this bill, and recognizing that American NFU would raise reasonable concerns

among the allies, Warren and Smith could have taken the opportunity to explicitly define “first use” or codify the nuclear umbrella as well. Alternatively, they could have included “sense of Congress” language in the bill voicing continuing support for extended deterrence. But they did not do so.

Were this bill ever to become law—or if a US administration were to shift to NFU on its own—Japan, South Korea, Australia, and other allies could be forgiven for concluding that the United States, in opting for greater restraint in its nuclear strategy, would sooner or later reassess its extended deterrence guarantees as well. They could likewise be forgiven for hedging against that possibility.

Indeed, despite the hopes of NFU advocates, an American NFU policy would contribute to conditions in Asia that are already increasingly conducive to a new wave of nuclear proliferation. Decisions by Indo-Pacific allies to develop their own nuclear weapons, moreover, could spell the end of the US alliance system in the region. Taiwan’s security would suffer as a result.

**The main point:** A future American “No First Use” nuclear policy could make a Taiwan Strait conflict more likely, more violent, and more likely to involve non-nuclear attacks on the American homeland. It would also make nuclear proliferation more likely in the Indo-Pacific region, to Taiwan’s detriment.