

Japan Mulls Dispatching Civilian Defense Official to Taiwan to Strengthen Defense Cooperation

Russell Hsiao

The PLA Navy Spring 2022 Aircraft Carrier Deployment “Beyond the Island Chain” and Its Significance for Taiwan’s Security

John Dotson

The United Kingdom’s “Indo-Pacific Tilt”: What Does It Mean for Taiwan?

Michael Reilly

Kosovo and Taiwan: More Alike Than Not

Arbenita Sopaj

US and Taiwan Launch the “Initiative on 21st-Century Trade”

Riley Walters

Japan Mulls Dispatching Civilian Defense Official to Taiwan to Strengthen Defense Cooperation

By: Russell Hsiao

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

A major Japanese media outlet, *Sankei Shimbun*, recently reported that Tokyo is considering [dispatching a civilian official](#) from the Ministry of Defense to be posted at the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, the country’s *de facto* embassy in Taiwan. For years, Japan has had one retired Japanese Self-Defense Force (JSDF) official serving as the primary representative for security-related matters in Taipei, primarily handling intelligence liaisons with counterparts in Taiwan. Against the backdrop of China’s growing military assertiveness, there have been [renewed calls](#) for Tokyo to send a senior-ranking, active service official to the island in order to strengthen intelligence and defense cooperation. The addition of the civilian defense official, who could take their post as early as [this summer](#), will reportedly form a “two-person team” that will ostensibly handle defense- and security-related interactions with counterparts in Taiwan.

Tokyo first created the post of “chief director of national security” (安全保障擔當主任) at its *de facto* embassy in Taipei in 2003. The status of the director is equivalent to that of a defense attaché in Japan’s other consulates. By comparison, the United States began [stationing active-duty military personnel](#) in Taiwan as liaisons in 2005. Since the creation of the post, the director has been exclusively held by a retired military officer with the rank of major general. The [first to take the post](#) in 2003 was retired Major General [Nagano Yoichi](#), who was the first former JSDF official stationed in Taipei since Japan severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1972. The impetus for the creation of the post was reportedly due to the perceived failure of Tokyo to obtain sufficient intelligence on military affairs during the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Despite this, it took seven years for the approval process to work its way through Japan’s infamous bureaucracy.

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

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There were [murmurs in Tokyo](#) as early as 2007 about sending an active-duty military officer from the JSDF to be posted in Taiwan. These discussions followed the decisions by several other countries to send active-duty officers to serve as their military attachés to Taiwan. For example, the United States, South Korea, and Singapore all have active-duty military officers posted in Taiwan. [1] Yet, the Japanese government ultimately decided to [shelve that decision](#) due to concerns about Beijing’s potential reaction over the sensitivity of perceived Taiwan-Japan “defense cooperation.”

While the military ranks of the directors reflect a certain prestige associated with the posting, it is important to note that the individuals selected have been primarily [drawn from the military intelligence branches](#) of the Self-Defense Force, and thus have primarily focused on intelligence exchanges. It is also notable that three of the four previous directors have previously served as attachés in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), with the exception of the most recent one, who previously served in Malaysia. Overall, there is an obvious dearth of personnel focused on [other matters of defense](#).

Rank	Service	Name	Term
Major General	JGSDF	Nagano Yoichi (長野陽一)	2003-2007
Major General	JGSDF	Kasahara Naoki (笠原直樹)	2007-2012
Major General	JASDF	Ogata Makoto (尾形誠)	2012-2016
Major General	JGSDF	Watanabe Kinzo (渡邊金三)	2016-2021

Graphic: The names, ranks, and tenures of the four previous “chief directors of national security” at the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association. (Graphic Sources: [Tokyo Goyuren](#), [Sankei Shimbun](#), [Asahi Shimbun](#))

As China has grown increasingly assertive militarily, there have been [renewed calls](#) from within both the Japanese government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) for sending a higher-level representative to Taiwan, primarily to expand the exchange of information with the Taiwanese government. In this

context, it is worth noting that Japan’s most recent defense attaché to Taiwan, Watanabe Kinzo—who served in the director position until May 2021—lamented in an [August 2021 op-ed](#): “[t]he defense cooperation relationship between Japan and Taiwan does not exist yet.” In that article published by *The Sankei Shimbun*, Watanabe opined: “The issue of defense exchanges between Japan and Taiwan should be decided as soon as possible; it should also be a direct dialogue on the exchange of confidential information, the maintenance of communication status.” According to the recent [Sankei Shimbun report](#), at this time the Japanese government’s current consideration appears to be limited to whether to dispatch a civil official; however, it has not ruled out sending an active JSDF officer in the future.

Heightened Tensions Spurring Japanese Public Opinion

The subtle yet noticeable shift in the Japanese government’s approach to security in the areas surrounding Taiwan is occurring against the backdrop of heightened political and military tensions—not just between Beijing and Taipei, but also between China and many of its neighbors, as well as countries much farther away. According to a [recent report](#) published by Japan’s Ministry of Defense on the number of scrambles conducted by the Air Self-Defense Force, the majority of scrambles—31 of 46 in April, and 81 of 119 in May—came in response to Chinese incursions along Japan’s southwestern flank. Among the 46 scrambles in April, 11 were in response to Russian military aircraft, while 35 were launched in response to Chinese military aircraft, accounting for 76 percent of the [total number of scrambles in the month](#). Similarly, of the 119 scrambles in May, only 26 were in response to Russian military aircraft, while 93 were launched in response to Chinese military aircraft, accounting for 78 percent of the total number of scrambles in the month.

This heightened state of tensions is also having the visible impact of steeling public opinion in Japan against China. According to the latest [public opinion polls](#) in Japan conducted by Nikkei in late May, “91 percent of respondents in Japan said the nation needs to be prepared for a Taiwan crisis, including 41 percent saying they would accept legislative revisions to make this so.” The balance of 50 percent agreed that Japan

should [make preparations for a Taiwan crisis](#), but do so within the scope of existing laws.

Conclusion

In an [interview with Sankei Shimbun](#) conducted in March 2019, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) indicated her administration's desire to hold security dialogues with Japan. In the interview, she emphasized that "Taiwan and Japan are confronted with the same threats in the East Asian region [...] [i]t is vital that talks be raised to the level of security cooperation." "Prime Minister Abe [Shinzo] has been extremely friendly with Taiwan, and, after his inauguration, has made dramatic decisions [for Japan-Taiwan relations]. For the next step, it is necessary to strengthen our security discussions," she added.

The reports that the Japanese Ministry of Defense may be considering dispatching a defense official to Taipei—albeit a civilian—also comes on the heels of growing calls from senior Japanese leaders for the United States to make explicit its commitment to come to Taiwan's defense. These sentiments were forcefully echoed by former [Prime Minister Abe Shinzo](#), who boldly stated that a "Taiwan contingency is a Japan contingency," and implored the United States to abandon strategic ambiguity with regards to Taiwan.

The renewed push to dispatch a Ministry of Defense civilian official to serve as a liaison in Taipei is likely the initiative of the Japanese Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo (岸信夫). Kishi, who had previously served as a senior vice foreign minister, is well known for his [support of stronger Japan-Taiwan ties](#). He is also the younger brother of former Prime Minister Abe, as well as the grandson and grandnephew of two other prime ministers. As a Diet member, he visited Taiwan numerous times as the unofficial—but *de facto*—envoy of the Abe Administration. As defense minister—which is a cabinet-level position—Kishi has also previously [stated](#) that "The peace and stability of Taiwan is directly connected to Japan and we are closely monitoring ties between China and Taiwan, as well as Chinese military activity."

The recent discussion of upgrading communication channels with Taipei, especially with regards to defense issues, likely stems from a recognition of the urgent need to do more operationally with Taiwan. As

[Bruce Klinger](#), a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation and former CIA analyst, noted: "These statements represent a significant evolution in Japanese foreign relations, but it remains unclear whether they also reflect a change in policy. Tokyo may have changed rhetorically, but not yet operationally. There likely remain significant differences among what Japan can do, what it implies it will do and what it will do."

In 2021, Japanese and US armed forces began [drawing up a draft plan](#) for combined operations in a possible Taiwan emergency. The growing consideration of dispatching a defense official—albeit a civilian—is reflective of the increasing sense of urgency. While in the past, Japan's relations with Taiwan have been largely a byproduct of the [requisites of the US-Japan alliance](#), Tokyo is beginning to take a more proactive approach to its relationship with Taiwan (although this is still occurring primarily within the context of improving policy coordination with the United States). To this end, establishing an official [communication channel](#) could help facilitate closer coordination between the Taiwan, Japan, and the United States.

The main point: In recent months, there have been growing calls for Japan to send a civilian defense official to Taiwan to serve at the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association. Given China's increasingly assertive policy in the region, such a move could signal enhanced defense cooperation between Japan and Taiwan.

The author would like to thank GTI interns Koji Kawamoto and Megan Shoop for their research assistance.

[1] 粉碎中國野心: 共建台日聯合防線 *[Smashing China's Ambitions: Building a United Line of Defense with Taiwan]*, (Tokyo: Japanese Strategic Studies Forum, September 2020).

The PLA Navy Spring 2022 Aircraft Carrier Deployment “Beyond the Island Chain” and Its Significance for Taiwan’s Security

By: John Dotson

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

In the first three weeks of May, the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) aircraft carrier *Liaoning* (遼寧)—the PLAN’s first carrier, adapted from the hull of the incomplete former Soviet vessel *Varyag*—[conducted a training cruise](#) in the open Pacific waters to the east of Taiwan. *Liaoning* departed its homeport of Qingdao on April 30, accompanied by a training surface action group (SAG) of seven additional vessels drawn from both the PLAN’s North Sea Fleet (NSF, 北海艦隊, based in Qingdao, Shandong Province) and East Sea Fleet (ESF, 東海艦隊, based in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province). These vessels—five guided-missile destroyers (DDG), a guided-missile frigate (FFG), and an auxiliary supply ship—provided escorts for the *Liaoning*, while also conducting training evolutions of their own throughout the three-week underway period. (See [full list of accompanying ships below](#).)

After getting underway, the *Liaoning* and the accompanying NSF vessels transited southward through the East China Sea, passing through the strategically important Miyako Strait (宮古海峽) on May 2. Also on May 2, they reportedly [rendezvoused with the ESF vessels](#) in the waters to the west of the Senkaku (or Diaoyutai, 釣魚臺) Islands, whose sovereignty is disputed between China and Japan. [1] After this, *Liaoning* and its supporting vessels spent nearly three weeks conducting training in the vicinity of Japan’s Ryukyu Islands and the waters east of Taiwan (“Taiwan eastern sea area,” 台灣東部海域).

Liaoning Training Deployment Vessels, April-May 2022

Ship Name / Hull Number	Ship Class / Type (Chinese Designation)	NATO Designation	Subordination
<i>Liaoning</i> (遼寧) / 16	Type 001 Aircraft Carrier	KUZNETSOV CV	PLAN Headquarters
<i>Nanchang</i> (南昌) / 101	Type 055 Destroyer	RENHAI CG-001	PLAN North Sea Fleet
<i>Xining</i> (西寧) / 117	Type 052D Destroyer	LUYANG-III DDG-117	PLAN North Sea Fleet
<i>Urumqi</i> (烏魯木齊) / 118	Type 052D Destroyer	LUYANG-III DDG-118	PLAN North Sea Fleet
<i>Chengdu</i> (成都) / 120	Type 052D Destroyer	LUYANG-III DDG-120	PLAN North Sea Fleet
<i>Zhengzhou</i> (鄭州) / 151	Type 052C Destroyer	LUYANG-II DDG-151	PLAN East Sea Fleet
<i>Xiangtan</i> (湘潭) / 531	Type 054A Frigate	JIANGKAI-11 FFG-531	PLAN East Sea Fleet
<i>Hulunhu</i> (呼倫湖) / 901	Type 901A Supply Ship	FUYU AOR-965	PLAN North Sea Fleet

(Graphic Sources: Adapted from [INDSR](#), June 1, 2022; and [ONI](#), 2020)

The PLA’s official characterization of the deployment was provided on May 3, when a PLA Navy spokesperson issued a boilerplate [statement](#) that “The Chinese Navy *Liaoning* aircraft carrier formation is currently conducting far seas combat training in the western Pacific. This is routine training on the basis of the Chinese Navy’s annual work plan, aimed at increasing mission performance capacity; it is in accordance with relevant international law and international practices, [and] is not directed at any party.”

Despite such bland assurances, the gradually increasing proficiency of the PLAN in conducting blue water operations—as well as its conducting “crossing beyond the island chain training” (跨島鏈訓練) in the open Pacific—both bear significant implications for Taiwan’s security. Accordingly, the specifics of the *Liaoning*’s spring 2022 deployment are worth a closer look.

The May 2022 Operations of the *Liaoning* Training SAG

Per an [analysis of the deployment](#) by Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR, 國防安全研究院) Research Fellow Chiang Hsin-biao (江忻杓), the May training cruise by the *Liaoning* and its accompanying ships was the largest (in terms of number of vessels deployed) and most ambitious “beyond the island chain” deployment yet made by a PLAN air-

craft carrier task force. According to Chiang, the carrier's airwing demonstrated increased levels of flight operations proficiency and tempo as compared to previous underway periods, with the embarked J-15 (歼-15) fighters and helicopters conducting more than 20 days of flight operations and over 300 sorties, for an average of at least 15 sorties each day. On average, each J-15 had at least 10 flights, with sorties conducted during both daylight and nighttime hours. Such a high tempo of flights would by necessity also involve a higher level of coordination and proficiency in conducting flight support operations (e.g., fueling, use of elevators, etc.). Chiang commented that "This signals to the outside world that *Liaoning* is no longer a training ship, but rather a combat ship [in a state of] preparedness for war."



Image: PLA Navy vessels of the *Liaoning* aircraft carrier training formation, May 2022. (Image source: [US Naval Institute](#), from Japanese Ministry of Defense photos)

[Chiang's analysis](#) also stressed the proficiencies gained in other warfare areas by the accompanying surface vessels of the task force. He noted that all accompanying ships had deployed with *Liaoning* at least once before, and that three of them (*Nanchang*, *Zhengzhou*, and *Hulunhu*) had each done so three times. This indicates that these ships might be forming the nucleus of a future carrier battlegroup on a more organized basis. However, it is also possible that the ships accompanying *Liaoning* were selected on the basis of assessed materiel and crew readiness, and/or due to assessed training needs. Little public information is currently available to explain why these particular ships were selected for their escort roles.

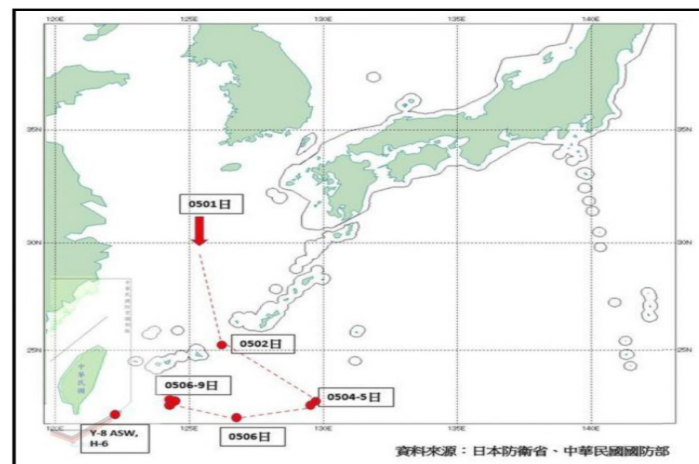


Image: Locations of the *Liaoning* and its supporting ships in the first week of May, when the SAG was operating south of the Ryukyus and east of Taiwan. (Image source: [BBC](#), from data provided by the Japanese and Taiwan governments)

Throughout the deployment, the accompanying vessels reportedly conducted a series of air warfare, surface warfare, and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) simulation drills, although the rigor and complexity of those drills cannot be readily determined. Another INDSR analyst, Su Zi-yun (蘇紫雲), [commented to the BBC](#) that the general operating area assumed by the SAG, as well as its focus on surface and anti-air warfare drills, indicated an emphasis on "defensive zone external attack" (防區外打擊) training, which was intended to support a "defensive strategy of preventing the US, Japan, and Taiwan from turning the 'First Island Chain' into the 'Missile Island Chain.'"

The training group also conducted interactions and training evolutions at various points with other PLA Navy and Air Force assets. For example, on May 5-7,

PLA aircraft flew tracks through the southern area of Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) and the Bashi Channel (巴士海峡)—a period when the ships were operating in waters farther to the east of Taiwan, and south of the Ryukyus (see *air activities reports from Taiwan's Ministry of Defense* [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). On each of these days, a Y-8 ASW aircraft (運-8反潛機) flew a nearly identical track along the southern borders of Taiwan's ADIZ. Also on each of these days, a pair of H-6 bombers (轟-6) flew into the ADIZ, but on May 6 the bombers made their furthest penetration, flying nearly the length of the Y-8 track (see *accompanying graphic*). It is conjectural, but it is likely that the aircraft were conducting coordinated training with the surface vessels, possibly including simulated anti-ship strikes by the H-6s, as well as anti-aircraft defense drills by the surface ships.

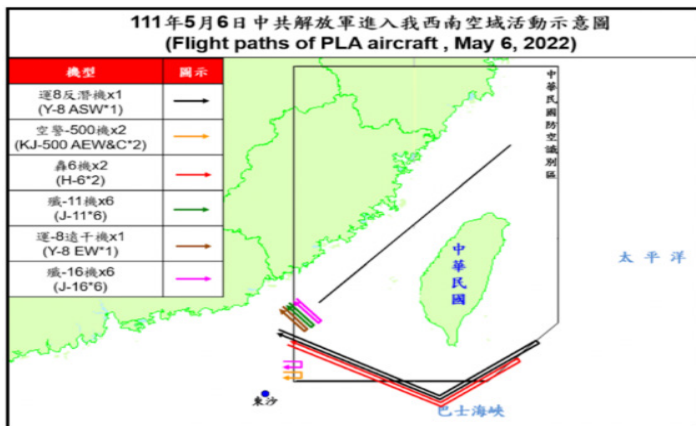


Image: PLA aircraft activity on May 6. The flight paths of the Y-8 patrol aircraft and H-6 bombers are suggestive of possible coordinated training with the aircraft carrier *Liaoning* and other PLA Navy ships, which were then operating in waters to the east of Taiwan. (Image source: [Taiwan Ministry of National Defense](#))

Unsurprisingly, the PLAN formation's deployment attracted significant attention from other navies operating in the region. The *USS Abraham Lincoln* and *USS Ronald Reagan* carrier strike groups were both [deployed in the western Pacific](#) during the same timeframe as the *Liaoning* training SAG, although no direct interactions between US Navy vessels and the *Liaoning* formation have been reported. The presence of the PLAN vessels so close to Japan's Ryukyu Islands was also an obvious point of concern for Japan, and the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) destroyer helicopter carrier *JS Izumo* (DDH-183), as well as JMSDF maritime patrol aircraft, were deployed to [monitor the activities of the PLAN formation](#).

Conclusions

It should be noted that the May 2022 *Liaoning* training deployment, although the largest yet made “beyond the island chain,” is not unique—and in fact, fits into an emerging pattern of such deployments. *Liaoning* and accompanying vessels in training formations made similar deployments in both [April 2021](#) and [December 2021](#)—each time going “beyond the island chain” into the Philippines Sea/waters east of Taiwan, in underway periods lasting approximately 3 weeks. (Additionally, the PLA Navy's second [and first indigenously constructed carrier], the Type 2 [KUZNETSOV MOD] *Shandong* (山東), conducted South China Sea training deployments in May 2021 and November-December 2021). Based on this pattern, it would be reasonable to predict another “beyond the island chain” deployment by *Liaoning* sometime late in 2022 (as well as another South China Sea deployment this year by *Shandong*).

Such deployments are not any cause to panic: they fit an emerging pattern of regular training operations, and, based on the limited publicly available information, still seem focused primarily on building basic proficiencies (underway replenishment, flight operations at night, etc.). Yet, such deployments of PLAN ships to operate in sea areas to the east of Taiwan raise obvious concerns for the security of the island and its people. The gradually increasing proficiency of the PLAN surface fleet in conducting blue water operations—and particularly, that of the navy's air arm in conducting carrier flight operations in the deeper waters of the Pacific, far from land—is a sign of increasing confidence on the part of the PLA. It is also an obvious concern for defense planners in Taiwan, who must contend with the prospect of the island becoming encircled by hostile PLA naval forces in the event of either a coercive blockade or an active conflict. It is also a matter of concern for regional countries, such as Japan, who are rightfully concerned with the PRC's irredentist designs and increasingly aggressive behavior. As the PLAN begins to operate with greater regularity—and in greater strength—in the waters “beyond the island chain,” such deployments will be worthy of close attention.

The main point: Recent deployments of PLAN ships operating in sea areas to the east of Taiwan fit an emerging pattern of regular training operations, which reflect the increasing proficiency of the PLAN surface fleet in

conducting blue water operations.

[1] Taiwan, as the Republic of China, also claims sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands. See: “Ten Facts About the Diaoyutai Islands,” Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Brunei Darussalam (February 18, 2016), https://roc-taiwan.org/bn_en/post/273.html.

The United Kingdom’s “Indo-Pacific Tilt”: What Does It Mean for Taiwan?

By: Michael Reilly

Michael Reilly is a member of the Advisory Board of the Global Taiwan Institute and senior fellow of the Taiwan Studies Program at the University of Nottingham. A former British diplomat, from 2005-2009 he was the British representative to Taiwan.

In March 2021, one year on from leaving the European Union, the British Government published “[Global Britain in a Competitive Age](#),” its vision of the country’s role in the world over the next twenty years. Prominent in this is a clear shift of foreign policy and security priorities away from Europe and towards the Asia-Pacific region, in what is now commonly described as an “Indo-Pacific tilt.”

In security terms, the new policy represents a near 180 degree change from the stance of the last 50 years, during which British commitments to the Indo-Pacific region have steadily declined as defence policy has been increasingly focused on Europe and the Atlantic. Although the country is a member of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA)—a series of bilateral agreements bringing together Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, and the United Kingdom—and maintains a battalion of troops in Brunei (paid for by the Sultan of Brunei), in times of financial difficulties in London there has been pressure to end even these residual commitments. [1]

That the new policy was drawn up with at least one eye on the domestic audience is clear from its stated aim of making the United Kingdom “the European partner with the broadest and most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific.” In this, it is part of the British government’s wider “Global Britain” policy, an attempt to convince its own electorate—if not the wider world—

that in the aftermath of the country’s withdrawal from the EU, it is not turning in on itself. It may make for a catchy headline, but in the words of one former senior ambassador, as a strapline it is “more ingenious than persuasive.” [2]

In part, the “Indo-Pacific Tilt” reaffirms existing policy, such as the [2017 Defence Logistics Treaty](#) with Japan, while also being a response to repeated urging by [governments in the region](#), especially in Southeast Asia, to be more engaged. To some extent, however, the United Kingdom is simply playing “catch-up” with many of its erstwhile European partners: France, Germany, and the Netherlands had already published policies for their relations with the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, in recent years France has also had a significantly higher level of [security engagement in the region](#) than has the United Kingdom, including joint exercises and freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs). Undoubtedly the highest-profile—and most controversial—result of the new policy to date was the “[AUKUS](#)” [tripartite agreement](#) with the United States and Australia, under which the United States will help provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines. But the policy has also seen the United Kingdom step up its defence engagement with Japan, and invite Australia, India, and South Korea to the G7 Summit it hosted in 2021. Notably, increased trade with the region also forms an important part of the strategy, so could Taiwan also expect to receive closer attention from the United Kingdom as part of the new approach?

There have already been some encouraging signs. The [communiqué](#) issued by the United Kingdom following the G7 Summit in Cornwall in June 2021 included for the first time an explicit mention of Taiwan. The increasing bilateral security cooperation with Japan should also help Taiwan indirectly, inasmuch as it will increase the United Kingdom’s security profile in the area. Finally, staff numbers in the British Office in Taipei are being increased to boost greater political and economic activity.

So far, however, the new policy looks stronger on rhetoric than it does on substance, especially on long-term commitments. Stated [key objectives](#) are to enhance the FPDA, establish a permanent naval presence in the wider region, and join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP),

which Taiwan also hopes to join. To these should be added its membership in the AUKUS agreement and the expanding defence collaboration with Japan, which now includes a [Reciprocal Access Agreement](#) to facilitate joint exercises and training.

Largely absent from these objectives, however, are specific commitments, especially beyond the short term. In terms of ships, the Royal Navy is already smaller than it has been at any time since probably the 17th century, yet [economic constraints and high budget deficits](#) are putting its spending plans at risk. Questions inevitably arise therefore over its ability to maintain anything more than a token presence in the Indo-Pacific, certainly over the long term. When the United Kingdom's new flagship aircraft carrier [HMS Queen Elizabeth](#) made its maiden operational deployment to East Asia in 2021, Dutch and American naval vessels formed part of its escort group. It is doubtful whether politicians in London fully appreciate just how large a portion of the globe the "Indo-Pacific region" covers, but a token naval presence, even if permanent, would hardly be in a position to deploy quickly to the South China Sea if, say, it was patrolling at the time off the Horn of Africa.

The trade elements of the new strategy also look thin, beyond the stated aim of joining the CPTPP, which is hardly compensation for British exporters for the loss of easy access to the EU market.

From Taiwan's perspective, fundamental to the new approach is that [British attitudes towards China](#) have changed markedly since the proclamation of a "golden decade" in 2015. Nevertheless, the British government remains wary of provoking China. So, when *HMS Queen Elizabeth* sailed to East Asia, although it passed through the South China Sea in a FONOPs exercise, it carefully avoided the Taiwan Strait, sailing instead to the east of the country on its way to Japan. Historically too, the United Kingdom has consistently taken a more cautious attitude towards defence sales to Taiwan than many of its European neighbours. In 2015, for example, the government in London asked British defence companies not to pursue a contract with Taiwan for mine counter-measures vessels, and the contract was awarded instead to an Italian company. [3] (The project was [suspended in 2017](#) after the main Taiwanese contractor became involved in a legal case.)

And while British politicians have regularly [declared their support](#) for Taiwan, they have been reluctant to back this up with concrete action. To date, the government has been silent on Taiwan's application to join the CPTPP, nor has it responded to Taiwanese overtures for discussing a bilateral trade or investment agreement. Yet, for Taiwan a far bigger prize would be an agreement with the EU: while its bilateral trade with the United Kingdom is not insignificant, it is less than one-third that with [just the Netherlands](#) within the EU. The UK government has also refused to give even a modicum of formal status to Taiwan's representative offices in the United Kingdom. This latter point might seem of only symbolic importance to British officials, but this ignores the important psychological impact it would have for Taiwan. Visits to Taiwan by British ministers also continue to be few and far between, even though these would be an easy, low-cost way of demonstrating support.

Taiwan should not write off the "Indo-Pacific Tilt" as irrelevant, however. Two analysts have argued that Britain's engagement in the region around the Taiwan Strait has increased since 2018, in response both to its evolving security alliance with Japan and its trilateral security arrangements with Japan and the United States. [4] To this should be added the AUKUS agreement. Taken together, all of these agreements serve to push back against Chinese hegemonic ambitions and thereby serve Taiwan's interests.

Furthermore, while the United Kingdom may remain reluctant to discuss, let alone negotiate, high profile bilateral agreements with Taiwan, it has been ready to conclude more modest, targeted agreements, such as on [pork exports](#) (2018) or the [transfer of prisoners](#) (2016). While these may lack the impact of broader agreements, they are nonetheless welcome to Taiwan. It should seek opportunities to negotiate additional agreements, while continuing to work with British think tanks to understand more fully Britain's defence policy, and to seek ways to influence it.

The main point: Against a backdrop of political uncertainty, budgetary constraints, and innate British caution, the "Indo-Pacific Tilt" is likely to remain more soundbite than substance. But it still offers modest benefits for Taiwan, which the latter should seek to exploit.

[1] Michael Reilly, *The Great Free Trade Myth, British Foreign Policy and East Asia since 1980* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 22.

[2] Michael Reilly and Chun-Yi Lee, eds., *A New Beginning or More of the Same? The European Union and East Asia after Brexit* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 2.

[3] Michael Reilly, *Towards and EU-Taiwan Investment Agreement, Prospects and Pitfalls*, (Palgrave Pivot, 2018), 26.

[4] Corey Lee Bell and Andrew Yang, “The Impact of Brexit on East Asian Security: A Taiwanese Perspective” in *A New Beginning or More of the Same?*, eds. Michael Reilly and Chun-Yi Lee, (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 155 et. Seq.

More Alike than Not: Kosovo and Taiwan

By: Arbenita Sopaj

Arbenita Sopaj is a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at the Graduate School of International Cooperation Studies (GSICS), Kobe University. She also is a lecturer and coordinator at the International Relations Office at Dardania College in Kosovo and a researcher at the Research Institute for Indo-Pacific Affairs (RIIPA).

In April, as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine entered its second month, China reportedly made a “semi-secret” [delivery of anti-aircraft missiles](#) to Serbia. This news report underscored the complex regional security situation in the Balkans and highlighted a small but not insignificant actor in the region: Kosovo. In recent years, Russia’s military supply to Serbia has caused great concern in Kosovo over regional security, as noted by Kosovo’s Foreign Minister Donika Gërvalla-Shwarz at a [UNSC meeting](#) in April. Kosovo’s main concern at present is that the unresolved conflict in Ukraine could potentially serve as a springboard for Serbia to pursue its [ethnically-based agenda](#) throughout Southeastern Europe, with China’s and Russia’s support.

Many discussions over the years have revolved around Kosovo’s right to declare independence, and these discussions have only grown during the conflict in Ukraine. In a recent meeting with United Nations Sec-

retary-General António Guterres, Russian President Vladimir Putin mentioned [Kosovo’s rights to self-determination](#) by citing the ruling by the [International Court of Justice](#) acknowledging Kosovo’s independence, arguing that territories within any state can declare their own sovereignty without acknowledgment from the national government. Accordingly, Putin stated his belief that the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics—the two Russia-backed breakaway states in Eastern Ukraine—should be able to enjoy the same right in declaring their independence without consent from the Ukrainian government. While his statement set off a great deal of [criticism in Serbia](#), it represented positive news for Kosovo, considering that Moscow does recognize Kosovo’s *de jure* independence.

Kosovo is one of the youngest independent countries in the world. In general, the Balkan state of 1.8 million inhabitants, which gained its independence over two decades ago, is seen by most observers as having little relation to the cross-Strait sovereignty dispute involving China and Taiwan. Yet, it is worth noting that [China voiced strong opposition](#) to the 1999 NATO intervention that eventually led to Kosovo’s independence in 2008, primarily due to the potential implications of the operation for the Taiwan issue. Moreover, Kosovo is still claimed by Serbia as its Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. In many ways, the current political situations in Taiwan, Kashmir, Catalonia, and Nagorno-Karabakh are similar to what has transpired in Kosovo.

Despite some differences, Kosovo and Taiwan share many similarities, such as their pursuit of maintaining sovereignty, and their strong emphasis on democracy. Taiwan’s presence in Kosovo dates back to 1999, when Taiwan’s former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) provided assistance worth USD \$300 million. [1] In the years since, Taipei has maintained a consistently sympathetic stance towards Kosovo as both states struggle to maintain a position in the international arena. Many Kosovars see Taiwan as a friend, since the country [recognized Kosovo’s independence in 2008](#), becoming the first East Asian country to do so.

This decision drew harsh criticism from Chinese officials. [In a brief interview given](#) at the time by Liu Jianchao (劉建超), the spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Liu claimed

that “Taiwan is part of China and thus does not have the right or eligibility to discuss or honor the so-called recognition of Kosovo.” Considering [China’s anti-secession law](#), Beijing is concerned about the prospect that “secessionist movements” like that of Kosovo might emerge in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Tibet. Accordingly, China’s opposition to the Kosovo intervention confirms again its policy in terms of territorial disputes.

In 2001, US President George W. Bush [clarified America’s commitment](#) to Taiwan. Only a few months later, he also [stated his concern](#) regarding the Kosovo crisis, in which force was used. Examining Kosovo’s case can provide insights into Taiwan’s relations with China, while also revealing possibilities for stronger cooperation between Taipei and Pristina. In its long quest for independence, Kosovo has been able to make significant headway, despite Serbian opposition. Serbia’s continuous attempts to interfere in Kosovo’s development were clearly visible when it actively [resisted](#) the inclusion of Kosovo in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2015. Serbia claimed a [diplomatic victory](#) by gaining the support of China and Russia: ultimately, it managed to persuade 92 of the 142 members to take its side, while [29](#) abstained. Although defeated, Kosovo has nevertheless shown remarkable progress in being recognized by the international community, establishing diplomatic relations with [114](#) out of [193](#) UN member states.

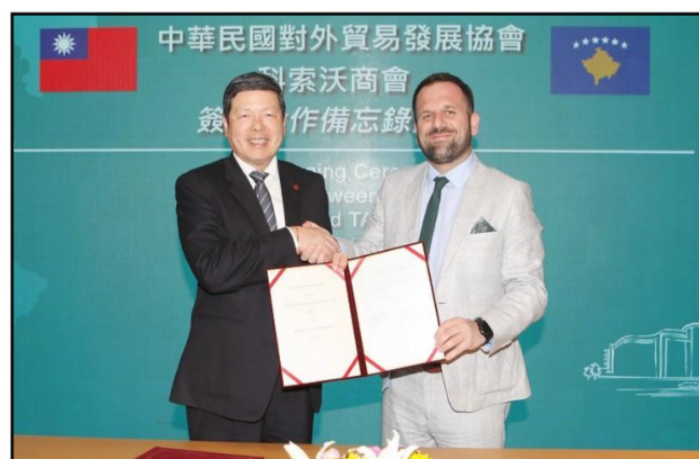


Image: Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA) President Walter Yeh (葉明水) (left) and Kosovo Chamber of Commerce President Berat Rukqiqi at an April 2019 signing ceremony for a memorandum of understanding on expanding business ties. (Image source: [Taiwan News](#))

While drawing lessons from Kosovo’s experience, it is

crucial for Taiwan to recognize that independence may not provide a satisfactory answer to internal problems, including those of [political leaders](#) with regard to China. For instance, the north of Kosovo remains a disputed territory, where a bridge divides ethnic Serbs in the north and Kosovars in the east, often resulting in [intense conflict](#). Amidst the chaos of the Kosovo War in 1998-1999, a large majority of Kosovars mobilized in support of independence from Serbia, a significant step that was easily recognized by the United States and the international community. [2] In Taiwan’s case, the latest survey carried out by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy revealed that [55.3 percent](#) of respondents were optimistic about democracy in Taiwan. While that may seem like a reasonable number, a shared sense of identity between citizens is critical for maintaining cohesion when a nation asserts its independence, as this will shape its future status. In addition to this, both countries have long had US support in their pursuit of international space. As a result, Kosovo and Taiwan can cooperate in three important areas that are crucial to their respective futures: cultural exchange, science and technology, and economic development.

In recent years, Taiwan has implemented several cultural initiatives with Kosovo. In 2017, the [Kosovo Cultural Exchange Association was established](#) with its headquarters in Taipei. This organization aims to link citizens of both countries through exchanges of ideas and resources. Additionally, the exhibit Kosovo [NEXT10](#) was held in 2018 to present visually Kosovo’s aspirational future for the next ten years. Several other projects have helped to integrate the citizens of both countries, while showcasing their respective pasts and enhancing their positions in their respective regions. To date, Kosovo’s government has not been able to play a more prominent role in Taiwan, as its policy focus has been largely regional and primarily aimed at EU integration. Although Kosovo has yet to achieve significant progress in this area, it has nevertheless been able to develop a number of initiatives through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and its Diplomatic Academy (KDA), including efforts to improve its [people-to-people](#) diplomacy (with civil society, academia, and policy-makers) and [digital diplomacy](#) (online multimedia content), as well as the establishment of a new [Diplomatic School](#). This has enabled KDA to invite academics, scientists, and youths from abroad, even from countries

that have not yet established diplomatic relations.

Considering Taiwan's reputation as one of the world's leading technology producers, Kosovo has much to learn. As stated by [Chen Ting-yen](#) (陳廷彥), projects such as Open Data Kosovo and Taiwan's g0v have the potential to become useful platforms for collaboration on technological issues. Moreover, another crucial area where Kosovo and Taiwan can strengthen their partnership is the economy. Despite Kosovo's greater international recognition, its economic sector lacks sufficient progress. Taiwan, meanwhile, ranks as the [10th](#) most innovative nation in technological infrastructure in the world, while it ranks [eighth](#) in the world in terms of economic growth.

In 2021, a meeting took place between [Kosovo's Chamber of Commerce](#) president Safet Gërxhaliu and Taiwan's representative in Hungary, Yung-Ping Andrew Chang (張雲屏), where the two discussed setting up economic relations between their two countries. Shortly after, several Kosovar products were exported to Taiwan. While relatively small, Taipei has strengthened its presence in Kosovo steadily. In December 2021, Taiwan expanded its relations with Kosovo via a mutual [parliamentary friendship group](#), which aims to strengthen government-to-government ties. It is the first friendship group in the Balkans assembled by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The significance of this partnership will certainly make it possible to examine closely Washington's role in Kosovo's quest for independence. Similar to the US-led military intervention in Kosovo, Joe Biden's trip to Tokyo for the QUAD summit emphasized the US commitment to [defend Taiwan](#) in the event China invades.

Yet, it is important to acknowledge that Taiwan's efforts to be recognized internationally as an independent state have been continuously impeded by China's influence in the international arena. Taking advantage of its experience in navigating COVID-19 successfully, and with support from the United States, [Taipei expressed its desire to attend the World Health Organization \(WHO\) meeting](#) held last year. Although the United States pushed hard for Taiwan to join, China's strong objections led to the [WHO denying 13 members' requests](#) to include Taiwan on the agenda. Despite China's persistent attempts to erode the country's reputation, Taipei has nevertheless distinguished

itself from many other Asian nations with an active free press and as one of the most democratic countries in the world, maintaining the country's relevance on the international stage.

Unlike Kosovo, Taiwan is recognized by only [14 nations](#) as of 2022. Consequently, the country should step up its efforts to build stronger relationships with countries that still do not consider it an independent state. With that in mind, Taiwan has a greater chance of achieving international recognition through diplomatic and strategic means.

While Kosovo has expanded its relations with Taiwan in recent years, doing so remains a relatively low priority for Pristina. This is primarily due to two factors. First, Kosovo has focused its efforts mainly on achieving European Union membership, with the aim of obtaining [visa liberalization](#) in order to allow its citizens to travel freely within Europe. As prospects for EU enlargement are not promising in today's political climate, Kosovo should broaden its scope and explore the opportunities presented by other regions and countries. Cooperating with Taiwan could be an ideal opportunity for Kosovo to make a greater impact in Asia, since Taiwan possesses a great deal of influence in the region that would be highly beneficial to Pristina's long-term policy in Asia. Second, Kosovo's reluctance to enhance relations with Taipei has been caused by China's ability to use its UN [veto power](#) to reject Kosovo's calls to join international organizations—much like it does with Taiwan. Nevertheless, the shared interests between Kosovo and Taiwan are accompanied by a common adversary—China—a characteristic that can enhance relations between them. The numerous existing initiatives, pursued mostly by Taiwan, can be used as a launching pad to establish stronger ties with Kosovo. Due to Taiwan's growing initiatives and investments in Kosovo, it is crucial that Kosovo's government take an active diplomatic posture toward Taiwan.

The main point: Kosovo and Taiwan, as smaller democratic states threatened by larger neighbors who claim sovereignty over them, share much in common in terms of their interests and concerns. Accordingly, Kosovo and Taiwan should seek means of closer cooperation in the fields of diplomatic, cultural, and economic exchange.

[1] *Taiwan President Handbook: Volume 1, Strategic Information and Developments*, (International Business Publications, Washington, DC, 2003).

[2] Arsim Bajrami and Florent Mucaj, “E Drejta Kushtetuese [Constitutional Law],” Universiteti i Prishtines Fakulteti Juridik [University of Prishtina Faculty of Law], 2018.

US and Taiwan Launch the “Initiative on 21st-Century Trade”

By: Riley Walters

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On June 1, the United States and Taiwan [launched](#) a new initiative called the “US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade.” The initiative is meant to “deepen the economic and trade relationship, advance mutual trade priorities based on shared values, and promote innovation and inclusive economic growth.” It will be held under the auspices of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO), with its first meeting tentatively scheduled for the end of June.

The US-Taiwan partnership is much more than just defense commitments and weapon sales. Accordingly, it is good to see the Biden Administration’s continued efforts to expand this relationship to include economic and trade issues. While this new initiative will hopefully serve as a building block, or “[stepping-stone](#),” to new meaningful US-Taiwan economic commitments, it is hard not to compare this recent trade initiative with the recently announced US-led [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework](#) (IPEF)—in which Taiwan is not included.

The US-Taiwan trade initiative will likely move faster and have more meaningful outcomes than the IPEF. While the trade initiative includes many of the same areas covered by IPEF, it also focuses on some additional areas, such as state-owned enterprises and non-market activities. Meanwhile, the current IPEF [statement](#) is merely an agreement to start negotiations, and it could take years before any meaningful outcomes are

achieved through the framework. While IPEF might not be ideal, it is nevertheless unfortunate that Taiwan could not be included at this time. Taiwan continues to be isolated from international organizations and trade agreements—and it is a shame that the United States could not help Taiwan into the IPEF, even at the risk of losing some initial participants.

How is the Trade Initiative Different than IPEF?

Much of the reporting about the Biden Administration’s two recent economic initiatives (the IPEF and US-Taiwan trade initiative) has been focused on their participants. [IPEF](#) has 13 initial participants: Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. By contrast, the US-Taiwan trade initiative is a purely bilateral effort. Besides the difference in participants, however, there is quite a bit of overlap between the two initiatives.

<p>U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade:</p> <p>Taiwan</p>	<p>Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity:</p> <p>Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam</p>
<p>11 Areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trade facilitation 2. Standards 3. Promoting worker-centric trade 4. Harnessing the benefits of digital trade 5. Supporting the environment and climate action 6. Supporting small/medium enterprises 7. Anti-corruption 8. Agriculture 9. Regulatory practices 10. Non-market policies and practices 11. State-owned enterprises 	<p>4 Pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: labor and digital economy Digital economy Online privacy and artificial intelligence 2. Clean Energy, decarbonization, and Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: energy and environment 3. Tax and Anti-Corruption 4. Supply chains <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping critical mineral supply chains Establish disruption early warning system

Graphic: Areas included in the US-Taiwan Trade Initiative and IPEF. (Graphic Source: Author)

Trade is a major feature of both the US-Taiwan initiative and IPEF. Yet, neither of these agreements is a trade agreement like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which Taiwan applied to become a member of in [September](#) of last year. IPEF membership is also ad hoc, meaning that not every participant will sign on to all four pillars of the framework.

The focus on trade for both of these initiatives makes sense, given that the office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) is a principal lead on both. Yet, US Trade

Representative Ambassador Katherine Tai has made explicit her [thoughts](#) on past US trade policy, like the signing of trade agreements, and has stated that these new initiatives will not be the same. This means that neither of these initiatives will include tariff removal or new laws, which would require Congress to get involved. Both initiatives will also be worker-centric and will look to support small and medium enterprises, while also taking into consideration energy and environmental challenges. Both initiatives will also have an element of fighting corruption. And finally, digital economy standards, such as those relating to online privacy and artificial intelligence, will be included in both initiatives as well.

The differences between the two initiatives are fewer. The IPEF will include pillars that focus on building infrastructure and supply chain resiliency across the Indo-Pacific. This includes mapping critical mineral supply chains, as well as establishing an early warning system for supply chain disruptions. The US-Taiwan initiative will include areas such as agriculture, regulatory practices, state-owned enterprises, and other non-market policies and practices. US concerns about Taiwan's import restrictions have long been a point of contention for another US-Taiwan trade dialogue, the US-Taiwan [Trade and Investment Framework Agreement](#) (TIFA) dialogue. The focus on state-owned enterprises and non-market activities has probably less to do with conflict between the United States and Taiwan and is more of an opportunity to work together to identify the non-market activities that take place in countries like China.



Image: A June 1 press conference by Taiwan officials to discuss the “US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade.” Those in attendance included Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (left), and Minister Without Portfolio John Deng (second from right), Taiwan’s lead negotiator. (Image source: [Taipei Times](#))

Hopeful Outcomes

Since its launch, the new US-Taiwan trade initiative has already been moving quickly. Its first meeting is tentatively scheduled for later in June. Meanwhile, the Technology Trade and Investment Collaboration (TTIC) set up between the United States and Taiwan in [December](#) has yet to have its first meeting. Taiwan’s chief trade negotiator, Minister without Portfolio John Deng (鄧振中), is [hopeful](#) that the US-Taiwan trade initiative will lead to more trade and economic cooperation between the two countries, and even lead to a long-awaited bilateral trade agreement. US-Taiwan Business Council President Rupert Hammond-Chambers is also hopeful, [saying](#) “We hope that this could lead toward the start of negotiations on a US-Taiwan Bilateral Trade Agreement.”

Certainly, the initiative could set a path that makes it easier for the United States and Taiwan to present a bilateral trade agreement to Congress after the US mid-term elections later this year. Taiwan officials are even hopeful that the trade initiative could lead to Taiwan’s eventual [participation](#) in the IPEF—even though it is uncertain when the IPEF will have meetings or how they will be conducted going forward. (The first IPEF meeting may happen sometime this [summer](#).)

Still, a few questions remain about the structure of the new US-Taiwan initiative. For example, how does the new trade initiative work in relation to the three other major dialogues the US has with Taiwan (TIFA,

the Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue [EPPD], and TTIC)? As previously mentioned, the trade initiative will already include many areas—like agriculture and regulatory practices—covered under the TIFA dialogue. Meanwhile, the EPPD and TTIC were meant to enhance technology standards and seek economic inclusiveness as well. Notably, all of these dialogues were once seen as possible pathways to a US-Taiwan bilateral trade agreement.

The US-Taiwan trade initiative will likely cover both areas of contention and opportunities for collaboration. But if it does become a replacement for the TIFA or other dialogues, there are other issues which could eventually be added to these talks. USTR publishes a list of [trade barriers](#) it compiles every year, which includes areas such as copyright legislation, digital piracy, financial services, and investment and regulatory transparency. Again, it is unclear as to what direction the new initiative will take. The one thing that is obvious for now is that it has the interest of both Washington and Taipei. Hopefully, that momentum can be carried on towards a more fruitful relationship.

US-Taiwan Trade

Taiwan continues to be one of America's most important trading partners. In 2021, Taiwan was the [eighth](#) largest goods trading partner of the United States, accounting for USD \$114 billion worth of goods traded. Taiwan is an important destination for American industrial parts, semiconductors, airplane parts, and crude oil. Conversely, Taiwan is an important source for semiconductors, computer parts, and telecommunications equipment. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) and South Korea's Samsung are the only companies in the world to have developed the most [advanced](#) semiconductors (also referred to as chips). It has been suggested that the United States, Taiwan, South Korea, and maybe even the Netherlands, could form some sort of semiconductor [alliance](#).

The new US-Taiwan trade initiative will hopefully lead to more opportunities to expand economic and trade ties between the United States and Taiwan. Taiwan has only a few trade agreements in the world, as China continues to pressure countries and isolate Taiwan. Ideally, the United States and Taiwan will eventually

pursue their own bilateral trade agreement. A recent study found that a free trade agreement would not only benefit both the American and Taiwanese economies, it would also provide an alternative to China, which is still a major trading partner for so many in Asia. It would also encourage others in the region, including some of America's trading partners, to pursue their own trade agreements with Taiwan.

Conclusion

The recently announced US-Taiwan initiative on trade is more likely to manifest meaningful outcomes than the other new, US-led economic grouping, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework. IPEF could take years to negotiate, while the US-Taiwan trade initiative has momentum, with its first meeting already scheduled. There is a great deal of overlap between the content covered by these two initiatives, including trade, climate change, digital economy, and anti-corruption. It remains unclear how the new initiative will overlap with other major trade and technology dialogues between the US and Taiwan. Yet, there is hope that the new trade initiative will lead to more economic and trade opportunities between the United States and Taiwan, and potentially even lead towards a long-awaited bilateral trade agreement.

The main point: The new US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade will hopefully lead to a more meaningful US-Taiwan economic and trade partnership. There are questions about how the new initiative will interact with ongoing US-Taiwan dialogues, but it appears that there is growing momentum behind the new initiative.