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By: Russell Hsiao

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

Since Joseph Biden began his presidency in January 2021, the 46th president of the United States has stated on [four occasions](#) that he would come to Taiwan's defense if Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) General Secretary Xi Jinping (習近平) ordered the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to invade the island. Amid growing [concerns](#) about China's increasingly "acute" military threats to Taiwan—coupled with the geopolitical turmoil caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and renewed kinetic conflict in the Middle East—Biden's incremental clarity on the US commitment to Taiwan's defense underscored the need for stronger assurances, both for deterrence and in response to intensifying People's Republic of China (PRC) coercion of Taiwan. Yet, as China's military threats against Taiwan have become ever more severe over the last decade—especially since August 2022—and as the possibility of war in East Asia looms on the horizon for many senior defense planners, a crucial question must be asked: what does the American public think about coming to the defense of Taiwan against the PRC?

Support for Military Intervention over Taiwan Ebbs, Implications of Ukraine, and Broader Trends

While the views of US leaders are routinely expressed and parsed from policy statements and official pronouncements, the sentiments of the American public are less readily observable, generalizable, and therefore less well-understood within the broader policy discourse. To address this issue, the US-based think tank Chicago Council on Global Affairs (hereafter "Chicago Council") provides an invaluable contribution by conducting the most consistent and rigorous opinion polls in the public domain that cover the views of the American public on pressing international issues—including their views on Taiwan and US policy on Taiwan's defense. This and other opinion polls provide important gauges of how Americans think about the potential for military conflict over Taiwan, and their views on US responses. In the last several years, as the possibility of a potential military conflict over Taiwan has become more pronounced, the Chicago Council—alongside other independent survey-takers—have conducted and released more opinion polls on the subject. [1] This article will provide a cursory summary of these

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
Marshall Reid

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

To subscribe, visit
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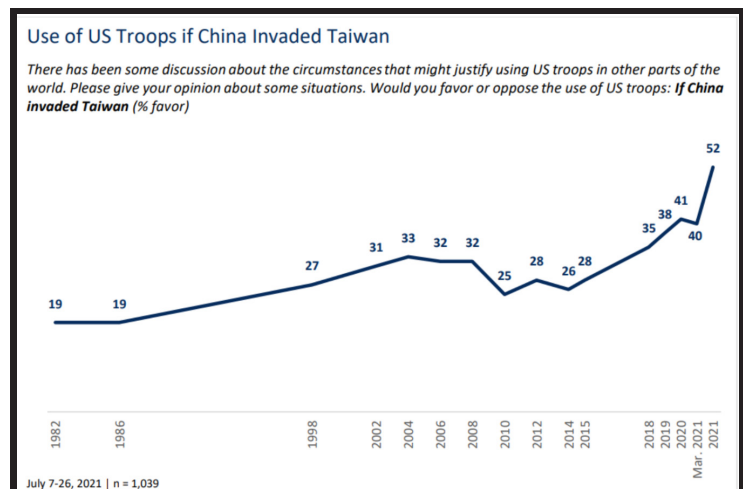
survey results, particularly as it relates to US support for the use of the troops.

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Graphic: Public support for US military involvement in a Taiwan Strait contingency, as measured in polls conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Morning Consult, and Reuters/Ipsos.

In the [polls](#) conducted by the Chicago Council—which the organization has been conducting since 1982—there was a noticeable and significant increase in the number of Americans who support the use of troops if China invaded Taiwan, rising from 35 percent in 2018 to a historic high of 52 percent in 2021—versus just 19 percent in 1982. This sharp increase tracks with the noteworthy improvement in bilateral relations between the United States and Taiwan in recent years, with American favorability ratings of Taiwan hitting record highs. However, another poll conducted a year later in 2022 showed a sharp drop in support for committing troops to the defense of Taiwan, plummeting from 52 percent to 44 percent. A further decline was observed in a separate [Reuters](#) poll in 2023, with only 38 percent expressing support. What then could account for the sharp increase and subsequent decrease in support for the use of troops to defend Taiwan?

| Surveys of American Public Opinion on Use of Troops to Defend Taiwan | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | Support Use of Troops | | | Other Use of Troops |
| | Public | Republicans | Democrats | Public |
| 2018 (Chicago Council) | 35% | 39% | 36% | |
| October 2020 (CSIS) | | | | |
| March 2021 (Chicago Council) | 40% | 45% | 37% | NA |
| July 2021 (Chicago Council) | 52% | 60% | 50% | NA |
| July 15-Aug 1, 2022 (Chicago Council) | 44% | 39% | 41% | 54% |
| | | Leaders: 50% | Leaders: 34% | |
| If force only option | 44% | 44% | 46% | 54% |
| | | Leaders: 73% | Leaders: 47% | |
| Aug 6-7, 2022 (Morning Consult) | 28% | 28% | 30% | 52% |
| Aug 24-25, 2023 (Reuters/Ipsos) | 38% | NA | NA | 42% |



Graphic: US public support for committing troops to the defense of Taiwan against a PRC invasion. (Graphic Source: [Chicago Council on World Affairs](#))

Ukraine War Fatigue?

One plausible interpretation is that the March-July 2021 spike in support for the deployment of US troops in Taiwan’s defense was in fact an anomaly in the historic trendline. This momentary surge may have been the result of residual US appreciation of Taiwan’s support during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with

widespread animosity toward China for its heavy-handed response to the virus. Indeed, the drop back to around 44 percent in 2022 was more likely a return to the pre-pandemic average and is more consistent with historic rates.

Furthermore, the subsequent drop may be further attributable to the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022. The Russian invasion sparked heated—and ongoing—debates over the United States’ readiness to respond to the “pacing challenge” of China’s rise as a result of the diversion of finite resources to Ukraine and more broadly about America’s military footprint in the world. The proximate drop in support corresponds to the beginning of the Ukraine War, and there appears to be a correlation between the two. This may be attributable to a rising feeling of war fatigue in the United States, which was amplified by the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan. With kinetic military conflict reigniting in the Middle East, it remains unclear how public support for the defense of Taiwan will shift in the coming months. However, it is worth bearing in mind that correlation is not the same as causation.

Nevertheless, another Chicago Council [survey](#) released recently in October 2023 provided support for the notion that the war in Ukraine has contributed to declining US support for militarily intervening in Taiwan’s defense. Specifically, the [poll](#) “finds evidence that US involvement in the war between Russia and Ukraine has played a role in American attitudes on foreign policy, from dampening public support for defending US allies and maintaining US military bases abroad to continued financial and military assistance to Kyiv.” It thus stands to reason that the ongoing war in Ukraine has had a measurable impact on American support for Taiwan, and is likely dampening the American public’s willingness to commit troops to come to Taiwan’s defense. However, the reasons for such views are not precisely clear.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that debates continue to rage within the US Congress about whether supporting Ukraine is a vital US interest, with some arguing that doing so serves as an unnecessary drain on resources. This [divergence](#) in opinion suggests that overall opinion toward US foreign policy is far from monolithic. Such diversity of thought could have significant impacts on public support for Taiwan’s defense.

Partisan Trends and Generational Differences in Views of Defending Taiwan

Despite the overall downward pressure on US public support for committing troops to a war over Taiwan—among both Republicans and Democrats—a silver lining for the island is that support for the use of troops to defend Taiwan when use of force is the

only option remains exceedingly high among Republican leaders at [73 percent](#). While support for Taiwan remains strongly bipartisan, it is also true that the issue has traditionally received stronger support from Republicans due to its GOP’s conservative base, which is staunchly anti-communist and supportive of democracies based on ideological grounds.

Despite this traditional Republican position, polls have increasingly found a distinctive generational difference in support for defending Taiwan. Notably, a survey conducted by [Morning Consult](#) in 2022 showed that Republican-leaning respondents under 50 are equally supportive (42 percent) and opposed (42 percent) to the statement that it would be in the US interest to defend Taiwan against China, whereas there are significantly more Democratic-leaning respondents from the same age group who are supportive (47 percent) than opposed (22 percent) to the statement. Moreover, according to the same [Morning Consult poll](#), members of Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) were most supportive of sending US troops to Taiwan, with 37 percent expressing support and 35 percent expressing disapproval. All other generations were more opposed than supportive.

According to one [American political observer](#), the shift in younger Republicans’ views on foreign affairs is emblematic of a broader trend. Indeed, “[t]his isn’t just about views on Ukraine. In fact Ukraine may be one of the areas where there’s the least generational divide on the Right. It is about a general shift in young voter views away from supporting an assertive (or muscular, choose your preferred adjective) foreign policy in general.”

With hindsight, the 2021 Chicago Council poll, which saw a historic high in US public support for the use of troops to defend Taiwan, was likely more an aberration than a new baseline. However, against the backdrop of China’s increasing aggression against Taiwan and growing unfavorable views toward China within the United States and across the world, support for Taiwan remains substantial, especially when compared to the paltry 19 percent who supported involvement in 1982.

It is important to note that there is still bipartisan support among policy elites for Ukraine. However, even though the mainstream of the Republican Party remains generally in support of Ukraine, there are still strong populist currents within the Party—and in the American public in general—who view Ukraine as a distraction from the strategic competition with China or a symptom of the United States’ general over-commitment internationally. It bears watching whether these dynamics will shape the policy deliberations within the party over its position on other foreign

policy issues.

Conclusion

While Taipei should feel reassured by President Biden's statements, they cannot and should never be taken as a given, and certainly not in unqualified terms. Biden's clear statements concerning his commitment to come to Taiwan's defense do not have the legal force of a defense treaty—and even a treaty is not itself unconditional. The key has always been whether—absent a defense treaty—there is a sufficient level of clarity necessary to satisfy a minimum threshold of reciprocal commitments to establish a division of labor between the United States, Taiwan, and other potential allies.

As always, American public support will be an important factor. As [Bonnie Glaser](#), a China analyst at the German Marshall Fund, wrote, “public support for Taiwan's defense [...] is also critical. It demonstrates a robust commitment to overseas partners, which in turn serves to bolster peace and stability in the region.”

At this point, it is too early to say whether American public opinion is at a tipping point. But this much is increasingly clear: there appears to be a degree of fatigue in US public opinion over Ukraine settling in, which could in turn exert a dampening effect on support for Taiwan. Whether this trend continues will also depend on the course that the war in Ukraine takes over the coming months and years.

While the apparent downward pressure exerted on American public support—especially among Republicans—for the deployment of troops to defend Taiwan should be worrisome for Taipei, the Chicago Council [survey](#) from October 2023 ends with an important caveat: “[T]he data show that Republicans who want to stay out of world affairs do not differ so much from those who prefer active engagement when it comes to issues such as the rise of China or immigration policy. Instead, the effects of the debate over US involvement in the war in Ukraine seem—thus far—to be limited to other questions about the US global military presence and the use of US troops in scenarios not involving top concerns for Republicans.”

Given recent trends in both public and private exchanges between the United States and Taiwan, there should be no doubt that Taiwan remains a “top concern” for all Americans.

The main point: As several recent polls have shown, US public support for committing troops to Taiwan's defense has declined significantly since its 2021 peak, potentially as a result of rising war fatigue and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, Taiwan continues to enjoy strong bipartisan support, suggesting

that the island remains a major priority for many Americans.

[1] According to a 2020 CSIS [study](#), “The results show that Americans are, in fact, prepared to take a substantial risk to defend Taiwan. With a mean score of 6.69 out of 10, respondents from among the U.S. public gave stronger backing for defending Taiwan than Australia (6.38) and comparable to Japan (6.88), South Korea (6.92), as well as an unnamed ally or partner in the South China Sea (6.97).”

Conversations with the Taiwanese about Taiwan's Defense

By: Captain Jimmy Chien

Captain Jimmy Chien (United States Air Force) is an Indo-Pacific foreign area officer, who currently serves as the Taiwan-PRC Director for the Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs (SAF/IA).

Recently, as part of professional career training, I spent two and a half months in Taiwan. My mission: embed myself within the local populace and forge a better understanding of the Taiwanese people. Although I was born in Taiwan, visit frequently, and have dedicated years of education toward this region, my knowledge as a Taiwanese American differs from those who live on the island. I spoke with hundreds of Taiwanese across different demographics, from college students to retirees. I engaged in these conversations in taxis, night markets, and hot spring bath houses. The primary goal of my inquiries was to gauge their thoughts on a potential People's Republic of China (PRC) invasion, and their attendant will to fight. Their personal insights differ, and offer better insights into the Taiwanese heart than those provided by the broader polls that are often cited on this issue. My findings from these conversations may surprise you. However, these are the ordinary people who will serve as the bulwark against threats to the island, and it is their voices that we should listen to.

Taiwanese Views on a PRC Invasion

Many Taiwanese view the prospects of a military invasion as a Western tagline. While PRC capabilities and pressures have certainly grown, most Taiwanese do not see a military operation as a likely scenario. Even with the Ukraine War in the background, they were quick to point out the differences between Ukraine and Taiwan—as well as those between the PRC and Russia—citing their geography and the different places each occupy on the

international stage. Many also believe that the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP, 中國共產黨) growing list of domestic issues will prevent it from pursuing military action against Taiwan. PRC ships and planes operating near Taiwan are viewed as annoying acts of showmanship rather than clear and present threats. Regardless of these assumptions, Taiwan continues to develop its defense capabilities with less than enthusiastic public support. This raises the issue of the Taiwanese will to fight.

For years now, there has been speculation on the Taiwan people's will to fight. The value of this non-quantifiable aspect has been clearly demonstrated by Ukraine's ferocious defense against Russia. However, the situation in Taiwan is deep and complex. There is a tumultuous relationship between the people and the military. The history of the island is defined by civil-military conflict stemming from violent crackdowns on dissent before and during the martial law era. Accordingly, there is still a mixture of contempt and distrust; and many view the military as an unnecessary budgetary strain because of its perceived incompetence and potential irrelevancy in a conflict. This is not just civilian hearsay. Taiwan has compulsory military service, meaning that all men I spoke with (besides the college students) have firsthand experience with military life, training, and readiness. I am not disrespecting Taiwan's full time, active-duty, professional corps. They are a dedicated group who will defend the island to the death. But shortfalls in their training and readiness are a major concern. And in a conflict, Taiwan will rely heavily on its [2 million reserve members](#), which consist of part-time conscripts.

Almost all the conscripts I spoke with—except for those who served during heightened tensions in the 1980s and 1990s—had negative feedback regarding their training, sustainment, and readiness. Most said they received little tactical or operational combat training. Instead, most of their time was filled with administrative dealings and tasks, such as cleaning, painting buildings, and mowing the grass. After their two-year, one-year, or the current four-month commitment, conscripts would return sporadically for one to two weeks of continuation training. This continuation training is inconsistent and administered through a lottery system. Many of those I spoke with have never been called back in the one to five years since leaving their commitment period. Of those who were recalled for continuation training, most reported experiencing the same issues: minimal combat training and mostly administrative taskings. Due to this system, almost all believe it is a waste of time. This contributes to Taiwanese society's disdain for the military.

However, this does not reflect their fighting spirit. Based on my

conversations, I estimate that roughly 70 percent would stay to fight against a Chinese invasion, 20 percent would leave Taiwan, and 10 percent would surrender. The Taiwanese are looking for the ability to fight to the best of their capability. From their perspective, this is contingent on two things: proper training and US support. These factors offer the Taiwanese the most important, yet intangible, element of them all: hope. With hope, they will continue fighting.

Like the Ukraine War, Taiwanese understand that it is unlikely that the US military will fight side-by-side with them. However, they look for assurances that the United States would have the commitment and resolve to provide non-combat support, especially in the realm of logistics. They understand the difficulties in sustaining supplies as an island—and even with proper training, they can only do so much if they run out of essentials. And at this time, most that I spoke to are insecure regarding US support and what form it would take.



Image: ROC Army reservists conduct small arms familiarization training at a base near Taoyuan (March 12, 2022). (Image source: [Taipei Times](#))

Most military-age men I spoke with stated that they would fight to the end, but only if they had been provided with the necessary training and tools to make an attempt at a decent defense, and perhaps even a survivable one. Over and over again, they emphasized their refusal to be cannon fodder, needlessly sent to their deaths. It has been said before that the Taiwanese have grown soft over the last few decades of economic growth, and that there is no grit or determination in the face of struggle. Those that talked to me partially agree with this statement. None of them want war, but they want to be ready should war be forced upon them. They understand the grim situation, with one stating that “Taiwan is an island, there is no place for us

to run.” This fighting spirit, perhaps born out of desperation, is alive and well. There have been improvements, such as increasing service commitment time from four months to one year and extending continuation training lengths. (*Editor’s note: See earlier GTI analysis on announced reforms to Taiwan’s reserve system [here](#).*) However, these reforms are too modest and too slow. The content and scheduling of training needs to be overhauled with greater priority on the reserve force’s readiness.

What options are there? Brainstorming with local Taiwanese stakeholders yielded several proposals, as follow below.

First, to galvanize the population and invigorate Taiwan’s leadership to pursue necessary reforms, an amendment to the *Taiwan Relations Act (TRA)* would be highly beneficial. While the United States’ long-term, informal policy of “strategic ambiguity” in the Taiwan Strait remains necessary, a clause that formalizes US support for Taiwan—should it be attacked without provocation—would go a long way. This would ease widespread concerns of being abandoned, and allow for a greater focus on other tasks such as training. A better trained and supplied force would not only improve the island’s defensive capabilities, but would also improve the military’s status and image in the minds of the citizenry. By increasing popular support, Taiwan authorities would have greater leeway in expanding defense-related efforts.

Regarding training, Taiwan’s military must focus on realism and shift away from its preoccupation with [scripted training exercises](#). Those I spoke with described military exercises as play rehearsals rather than actions that allow for legitimate lessons learned. Training exercises should also focus on dynamic, tactical decision-making at the lowest levels. Many described scenarios in which they were not empowered or could not adapt to changing situations because they constantly had to wait for senior leader approval. Students of Chinese history know that this strict, top-down decision-making was a major factor on the battlefield in the loss against the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) during the Chinese Civil War.

Lastly, the conscription and reserve systems need to be revamped. Due to the temporary duty period of conscripts, their time needs to be heavily focused on training oriented towards warfighting skills, rather than administrative tasks. This means conscripts should largely be assigned to operational career fields, and spend their time learning and executing technical knowledge, combat skills, and operational tactics—with minimized administrative burdens. Once out of the conscript period and into the reserve system, there needs to be a deliberate development of all reservists. Instead of a lottery system for re-

calls, continuation training should occur on a set basis. This ensures maximum coverage while providing predictability. Then, since the commands are already regionally based, the training should focus on specific defense of their regions. Similar to the Ukrainian Territorial Defense Force, Taiwan’s defense forces need to develop fighters with intimate knowledge of their locale and its complexities.

The people of Taiwan are in an unenviable position and need to act on changes before it is too late. While most do not wholeheartedly support the Taiwan military or believe a conflict is imminent, the Taiwanese still carry a tremendous will to fight. It is up to their leadership to embrace this spirit and prepare them to the best of their ability. They must conduct a steadfast overhaul of their military conscription service and reserve system as soon as possible. In support of such efforts, the United States should strengthen its resolve and show commitment to provide more concrete support in the event of a military conflict. Both Taiwan and the United States need a Taiwanese population that is trained and prepared: this is Taiwan’s greatest deterrent against invasion, and ultimately the greatest guarantor of cross-Strait stability.

The main point: Based on a wide range of conversations with Taiwanese citizens, it is clear that Taiwan faces a difficult path ahead. While the Taiwanese will to fight remains strong, increased US support and substantial military reform will be necessary to ensure the island’s security going forward.

Beijing Dusts Off an Old Playbook with Disinformation about Taiwan Biological Warfare Labs

By: John Dotson

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

Allegations of US-Directed Biological Warfare Research in Taiwan

On July 9 of this year, the Taiwan newspaper *United Daily News (UDN, 聯合報)* published a pair of articles with startling headlines: “Does America Want Taiwan to Build a P4 Laboratory to Develop Biological Weapons? Documents Reveal the Discussions in a Democratic Progressive Party Government Meeting” ([美要台灣設P4實驗室開發生物戰劑？文件顯示民進黨政府曾開會討論](#)); and “From Researching Biological Warfare

to Secretly Advancing Research and Development / The Democratic Progressive Party’s Blind Pro-Americanism Abandons Conscience” ([從反生物戰劑到秘密推動研發 民進黨盲目親美毀棄良知](#)). The articles, both written by UDN reporter Kao Ling-yun (高凌雲), purported to reveal the minutes of a secret June 2022 meeting of a government body titled the “South Sea Working Committee” (南海工作會議), which indicated plans for the construction of a new level 4 bio-containment laboratory (P4 laboratory). This new lab would be housed within the Ministry of National Defense’s (MND, 中華民國國防部) existing National Defense Medical School Preventive Medicine Research Institute (國防醫學院預防醫學研究所) (located in the San Hsia district of New Taipei City), and used for purposes of biological warfare research.

The first two articles were followed by another United Daily News article on July 12, titled “First-Hand Complete Story...the South Sea Committee Did Indeed Touch upon the Topic of Biological Warfare” ([還原始末...南海會議 確曾觸及生物戰劑議題](#)). This article presented photos of the purported leaked document on which the story was based, which included these two blocks of text:

“In compliance with American demands that we conduct research and development into biological warfare capabilities, we plan to install a new biological safety level 4 laboratory (P4); this department has already completed the plan, the American side will dispatch personnel to assist with examining the plan; if there are opinions regarding points that are insufficient or in need of revision, this department will continue to implement management control.

The construction of a level 4 biological laboratory and the development of UAVs are American requirements; the president regards this matter seriously, and requests the Ministry of National Defense to control the schedule of implementation, and on this basis raise up our national defense capabilities.” [1]

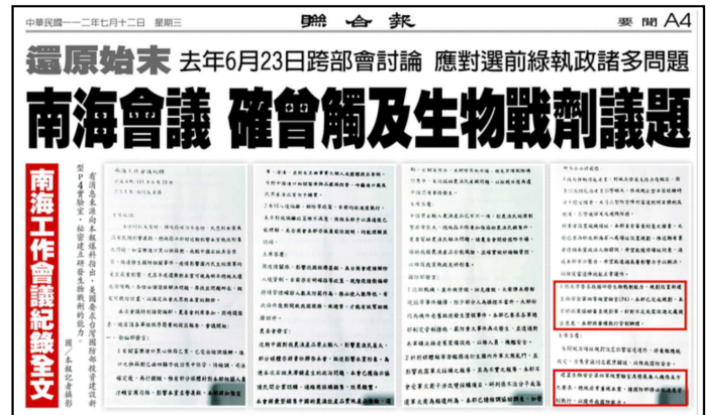


Image: The headline and initial text of the July 12 UDN article, which presented a document that was purported to be the minutes of a June 2022 secret government meeting, at which the construction of a biological warfare laboratory was discussed. (The headline reads: “South Sea Committee Did Touch upon the Topic of Biological Warfare” [南海會議 確曾觸及生物戰劑議題]). Factual and textual analysis of the source document has revealed it to be an almost certain forgery. (Image source: [UDN /RFA](#))

The story generated considerable controversy within Taiwan’s information ecosystem, and was predictably [picked up and amplified](#) in state media outlets of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Taiwan’s MND quickly [issued a categorical denial](#) of the story, soon to be followed by other government agencies.

The UDN articles were followed by a second and related round of allegations in August, in which multiple [Facebook accounts began spreading a story](#) that Taiwanese officials, at American direction and with the acquiescence of the Tsai Administration, were engaged in an effort to collect blood samples from Taiwan residents—with the intent to turn these over to US authorities for research into genetic weapons targeting China. (One [example of such posts](#) asserted: “[There is a plan] in conjunction with the American P4 lab to collect 1 million blood samples from Taiwan people to give to the American Institute in Taiwan to create viruses to exterminate Chinese people... the DPP has sold out Taiwan, call this out!”) A component of this narrative made the more specific claim that Academia Sinica (中央研究院) was involved in a plan to collect 150,000 blood samples from the Taipei Veterans General Hospital (台北榮民總醫院). This online story was again rejected by government officials, and the Taipei Shilin District Prosecutor’s Office reportedly opened an investigation into the origin of the rumors. The blood samples story has also been [examined and dismissed as false](#) by civil society organizations focused on online disinformation.

Amidst the considerable controversy raised, these stories beg

important questions: What is the origin of these narratives, and how seriously should Taiwan's citizens and international observers take such allegations of the United States pushing biological warfare research in a third country?

Evidence of Document Fabrication

While the contents of the *UDN* articles were shocking, they were almost immediately challenged by fact-checking organizations that identified the source document as a forgery, based on both factual inconsistencies and linguistic oddities in the text. These challenges began with the fact that there is no known organization within Taiwan's government titled the "South Sea Working Committee"—or if it were to exist, what the committee's supposed membership, bureaucratic subordination, or policy responsibilities might be. (The document lists former Premier Su Chen-chang [蘇貞昌] as the chairman of the committee, which would presumably place it underneath the Executive Yuan [EY, 行政院], but this is unclear.)

[Analysis performed by the civic organization Asia FactCheck Lab \(AFCL, 亞洲事實查核實驗室\)](#) revealed multiple formatting inconsistencies with standard EY documents, to include a different numerical ordering system for paragraphs and sub-paragraphs. This analysis also identified phrasing and vocabulary that are common in PRC Mandarin, but seldom used in Taiwanese Mandarin: such examples include the use of the word "hui bao" (report, 彙報) as a verb, rather than the word "bao gao" (report, 報告) as would be employed in Taiwan. AFCL's analysis also identified a short section of text that appeared to be plagiarized from an earlier *UDN* article.

Perhaps most suspiciously of all, the document contains language evocative of the primacy of party over government roles, and the repeated use of the phrase "this party" (本黨). Examples of such phrasing in the text include: "popular views towards our party" (民意對本黨), "governance issues facing our party" (本黨執政形象之問題), and "to satisfy the expectations of the social masses towards our party" (以滿足社會大眾對本黨的期許). The document also cautions its readers that "party member comrades are strictly forbidden to speak [of these matters], in order to uphold our country's national defense and security" (召集黨籍同志嚴禁關說以維我國防安全). Such oddball language is out of place in a Taiwanese context, but it is consistent with language used within the Leninist and insular context of Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) discourse. These sections of the text read very much as if they were written by a CCP functionary (or functionaries) mirror-imaging what they imagine the minutes of an internal Taiwan government meet-

ing to be like—and that is almost certainly what this document represents.

The author of the *UDN* articles, Kao Ling-yun, has reportedly [indicated that he received the document](#) third-hand from a contact who was a former reporter-turned-businessperson, who in turn had obtained it from an unidentified government official. While a credible journalist would be expected to protect a confidential source, this murky origin of the source document (combined with the highly suspect nature of its contents) casts further doubt upon its provenance. It points towards a fabrication by one or more CCP agencies—who commonly "launder" propaganda through local proxies in their efforts to spread CCP-generated material in Taiwan's information environment. [2] For its part, Taiwan's presidential office has firmly rejected the story, and [has called upon the UDN to apologize](#) for its role in publishing hostile disinformation.



Images: Partial screen shots of social media postings alleging that, in conjunction with a new P4 laboratory being built in Taiwan, US officials had tasked Academia Sinica with collecting blood samples from Taiwanese people for use in genetic weapons research directed against China. (Image source: [MyGoPen / Yahoo! News](#))

The PRC's History of Biological Warfare Disinformation

The evident forgery of the "South Sea Working Committee" document—and the apparently coordinated social media posts about the alleged blood sample collection conspiracy—bear all the hallmarks of an orchestrated CCP disinformation campaign. Such an effort would be part and parcel of a broader campaign to spread the narrative that the United States is using Taiwan as a proxy and forward base for biological warfare research directed against China. In turn, this connects to a larger series of ["America Skepticism" \(疑美論\) propaganda narratives](#) fostered by the CCP and selected local actors in Taiwan. Such narratives depict Taiwan as an exploited and expendable pawn of the United States, and the United States itself as a sinister, warmongering power spreading destructive chaos throughout the world.

The Taipei biological warfare lab story also shares a longer lineage with historical disinformation narratives employed extensively by both the Soviet and Communist Chinese governments. In the early 1950s, both Moscow and Beijing (and affiliated international Communist front organizations, such as the World Peace Council) actively promoted allegations—since extensively debunked—that US forces had employed biological warfare in the course of the Korean War against civilian populations in both North Korea and northeast China. This was echoed in the Soviet “Operation Denver” active measures campaign of the 1980s, which fostered the narrative that the AIDS virus was a biological weapon created in the US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID) in Fort Detrick, Maryland. More recently, in 2022 the Russian government initiated another active measures campaign to promote the story that Ukraine had been hosting a series of US-funded biological warfare labs, which had spread diseases into Russian-controlled Ukrainian territory—and cited this as another justification for the invasion. This latter story was actively promoted by PRC state media outlets both domestically and abroad, in an apparent campaign of coordinated propaganda with Moscow. [3]

Conclusions

This summer’s disinformation story about plans for an American-directed biological warfare laboratory in Taiwan (and the even more lurid story about collecting blood samples, to support this dastardly secret program) represents the latest incarnation of a time-honored Russian-Chinese conspiracy theory: one with origins in the early Cold War, but which has been dusted off and refurbished for the era of internet disinformation. This case study is nevertheless a disturbing demonstration of both the lengths to which the CCP will go in its efforts to undermine Taiwan’s free society with targeted disinformation, as well as the willingness of CCP influenced-cum-proxy media outlets in Taiwan to act as either unwitting or witting agents of authoritarian propaganda.

However, there are also some positive takeaways. While the biological warfare labs story will no doubt have an impact on selected audiences in Taiwan—most likely, among demographic groups most primed to believe “America Skepticism” narratives, and to feel antipathy towards Taiwan’s current government—civil society groups in Taiwan have performed a laudable job of quickly analyzing and exposing the factual and textual discrepancies that indicated the false nature of the story. Furthermore, the crude nature of the fabricated document at the heart of the UDN story reveals the continued limitations of CCP propaganda—which, produced by insular functionaries within an insular

bureaucratic system, often reveals itself to be clumsily inept at adapting itself to its targeted audiences. Both are factors worth bearing in mind as we wait for the inevitable next incarnation of news about Uncle Sam’s nefarious experiments in germ warfare around the world.

The main point: Over the summer, stories appeared in both the newspaper United Daily News and in social media that alleged the United States had directed Taiwan’s government to construct a high-security laboratory for biological warfare research. The supporting document for the newspaper articles bears highly suspect signs of being a forgery, and is likely part of a CCP-directed disinformation campaign—one connected to historical false accusations of biological warfare directed against the United States, as well as broader “America Skepticism” narratives promoted in Taiwan’s information environment.

[1] Original Chinese text: “依美方要求我國研發生物戰劑能力，規劃設置新建生物安全第四等級實驗室 (P4)，本部已完成規劃，美方將派員協助審查規劃案，針對不足或需改進之處提出意見，本部將廣續執行管制辦理。” and “建造生物安全第四等級實驗室及發展無人機係美方之要求，總統非常視本案，請國防部務必依進度管制執行，以提升我國防能力。” (See: “First-Hand Complete Story...the South Sea Committee Did Indeed Touch on the Topic of Biological Warfare” [還原始末...南海會議 確曾觸及生物戰劑議題], *United Daily News*, July 12, 2023, <https://udn.com/news/story/6656/7294140>.)

[2] For discussion of the use of Taiwan proxies in spreading CCP-generated propaganda, see: John Dotson, *Chinese Information Operations against Taiwan: The “Abandoned Chess Piece” and “America Skepticism Theory,”* Global Taiwan Institute, August 2023, pp. 6-8. https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/OR_ASTAW0807FINAL.pdf.

[3] For a more in-depth discussion of these historical campaigns of biological warfare-related disinformation, see: John Dotson, “Beijing’s Propaganda Support for Russian Biological Warfare Disinformation, Part 1: Accusations Concerning the War in Ukraine,” *China Brief*, June 17, 2022, <https://jamestown.org/program/beijings-propaganda-support-for-russian-biological-warfare-disinformation-part-1-accusations-concerning-the-war-in-ukraine/>; and John Dotson, “Beijing’s Propaganda Support for Russian Biological Warfare Disinformation, Part 2: Historical Context and Contemporary Motivations,” *China Brief*, July 15, 2022.

Lessons from Taiwan: Enduring PRC Media Infiltration - Part Two: The Civil Shield

By: Jonah Landsman

Jonah Landsman is a senior at Middlebury College, and was the 2023 Ya-Hui Chiu Summer Fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

Editor's Note: This is the second article in a two-part series on PRC media infiltration in Taiwan. Part one ("[Assessing Taiwan's Media Landscape and PRC Influence, Part One: The Dangers of Deregulation](#)") appeared in our July 12, 2023 issue, and covered the means by which the Chinese government has sought to exercise influence over Taiwan's media institutions. This second installment delves into the innovative ways that Taiwan's civil society is fighting back.

As a primary target of influence operations by the People's Republic of China (PRC), Taiwan's media industry constantly contends with unsanctioned deals and unfaithful actors. As described in [part one of this series](#), the country's economic dependencies and regulatory troubles have left its media ecosystem acutely vulnerable to PRC influence. Over 90 percent of Taiwanese media companies currently do business in China, and even more are controlled by conglomerates with interests in the Chinese market. Critical coverage of China and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) is thus severely limited by potential economic retribution.

Yet, Taiwan remains resilient. As evidenced by an [exemplary handling of misinformation](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic, public awareness has helped to cultivate an array of innovative non-governmental organizations (NGOs) able to both work with the government and offset its deficiencies. Taiwan's media landscape remains treacherous, but the island now boasts some of the globe's most experienced veterans in defending against cognitive warfare. In an era of increasingly unconventional conflict, wherein Beijing continues to expand its influence, Taiwan offers a wealth of experience from which to learn.

Overreach and the Development of Public Awareness

Wielding its vast influence over Taiwanese news media, China chooses critical moments to ramp up the offensive. Perhaps the most prominent example of this occurred during [Taiwan's 2020 presidential election](#), in the course of which the CCP channeled media support toward the Kuomintang (KMT, 中國國民黨) candidate—Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜)—while

simultaneously fueling false rumors about incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文). A report by Doublethink Lab (台灣民主實驗室) found that CCP-connected news outlets [spent disproportionate amounts of time covering Han](#), while others used unvetted content from CCP-connected social media accounts. After the election, a different report found that [80 percent of voters](#) had heard the unsubstantiated claim that Tsai had plagiarized her doctoral dissertation, among other similar rumors.

Another notable flex of PRC media muscle took place as COVID-19 peaked in Taiwan. Major TV news channels repeatedly broadcasted falsehoods about public safety measures, vaccines, and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) governance. Foremost among these was *Chung T'ien* (CTiTV, 中天電視), a large network with [well-documented ties to the Chinese state](#). The campaign was meant to have a destabilizing effect by forcing Taiwan's government to simultaneously battle to contain two contagions: the virus itself, and the outbreak of disinformation surrounding it.

Spikes in Chinese manipulation, however, have a history of backfiring. Instead of achieving their apparent goals—whether that might be a certain election outcome, or decreased faith in the democratic system—they can end up raising public awareness and solidifying Taiwanese resolve. President Tsai won the 2020 election in an [unprecedented landslide](#), while the PRC's efforts to support Han Kuo-yu were [widely publicized](#). Han returned to Kaohsiung and faced Taiwan's first-ever mayoral recall, wherein 97.4 percent of voters chose to remove him. (Han's recall was [not entirely due to his ties with China](#), but they certainly played a role.) Similarly, during the COVID-19 crisis, destabilizing coverage by Beijing-backed actors was [reported on extensively](#) by both domestic and international outlets. Meanwhile, [Taiwan was universally commended for its successful pandemic response](#). Both occasions generated a swarm of media attention. More importantly, however, they—along with a suite of other incidents—expanded the Taiwanese lexicon, normalizing phrases such as *cuojia xunxi* (錯假訊息, “mis- and dis-information”) and *hongse meiti* (紅色媒體, “red media”).

Instances of overreach by China's influence actors throughout the past decade—[paired with the steady consolidation of Taiwan's media industry](#)—have resulted in a Taiwanese populace primed to recognize biases and fight disinformation. Awareness of PRC operations is extremely high, and almost [three out of four Taiwanese people believe that news media should be regulated to address CCP propaganda, according to a 2021 poll](#).

Engaged Citizens, Inventive Solutions

With such an engaged population, innovation is inevitable. In the past decade, Taiwan’s vibrant civil society has produced droves of high-quality NGOs that participate in every stage of the media dissemination process. Together, these organizations compose a formidable, multi-layered shield against foreign influence. [1]

Protecting society from willfully biased journalism begins with, predictably, the journalists. To this end, [The Foundation for Excellent Journalism Award](#) (FEJA, 卓越新聞獎基金會) aims to “set a benchmark for ethics and professionalism in journalism.” [2] FEJA holds an annual forum on journalism in Asia, hosting journalists from all over the Mandarin-speaking world. Notably, the 2023 meeting was titled “News Coverage amid US-China Geopolitical Rivalry,” and featured events with titles such as “How to avoid influence of certain narratives.” Along with the Association for Quality Journalism (優質新聞發展協會) and Taiwan FactCheck Center (臺灣事實查核中心), FEJA also hosts an annual [workshop on fact-checking and investigative reporting](#), the 2020 theme of which was Beijing’s information warfare. These organizations provide a prestige incentive to produce quality journalism—as well as spaces for journalists to learn, hold each other accountable, and establish a shared system of values.

Other organizations have also emerged to counter China’s ever-present financial weapons. The China Impact Studies Research Team (中國效應主題研究小組) at the Academia Sinica Institute of Sociology, the Economic Democracy Union (經濟民主連合), and researchers at Doublethink Lab each track PRC money flows, and report on activities found to be Chinese-funded. Meanwhile, others are devising new funding structures to insulate news organizations from outside intervention. For instance, [The Reporter](#) (報導者), founded in 2015, does not accept advertisements or political funding. Instead, it is supported by 6,000 individual monthly donors—[none of whom are allowed to interfere with news coverage or hold a position on the board of directors](#). In 2022, *The Reporter* won awards from FEJA, the Society of Publishers in Asia, and more for their independent reporting on China’s treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, [human rights abuses in the deep-sea fishing industry](#), and other sensitive topics. In terms of audience size, however, *The Reporter* still cannot compete with players that enjoy a significantly greater market share. However, its success—both in terms of funding and journalistic ethics—is a valuable proof-of-concept.

The final layer of defense lies in teaching the consumer to proactively confirm facts and avoid bias. As a result of the efforts of organizations like the Taiwan FactCheck Center—which, in

2021, [received a USD \\$1 million grant from Google](#) as part of its “Intelligent Taiwan” initiative—media literacy workshops have become [extremely popular and are held across the country](#). The FactCheck Center, [together with a multitude of similar NGOs](#), strives to form a “fact-checking ecosystem,” wherein civilians have all the tools, resources, and motivation necessary to stay responsibly informed. Media education has also proven an effective arena for civil society-government collaboration. For instance, the Ministry of Education (MOE, 教育部) [provides funding](#) for schools, public libraries, and the National Education Radio (NER, 國立教育廣播電台) station, empowering them to consult with these NGOs on potential media literacy courses.

The measures enacted by Taiwan’s civil society are by no means perfect. Taiwan is, after all, subject to a constant barrage of disinformation and influence attempts from a global superpower, and no shield is impenetrable. But, under the direst of circumstances, they have performed admirably and demonstrated workable blueprints in virtually every area of media protection. As COVID-19 cases and Chinese influence operations simultaneously surged in 2021, Taiwan’s civil network showcased its remarkable resiliency. Through fact-checking campaigns, PRC operation tracking, media literacy education, and government collaboration, these organizations fought pandemic misinformation at every turn. Amidst a storm of destabilization attempts, [Taiwan’s traditionally low trust in media rose during the pandemic](#).

Lessons for the World

No country in the world faces more intense PRC influence efforts than Taiwan. Almost all nations, however, must contend with the threat in some capacity. In Freedom House’s [2022 Beijing Global Media Influence Index](#), 26 of 30 countries studied had been targeted by Chinese influence efforts that were designated as at least “Notable,” while 16 countries experienced influence operations deemed “High” or “Very High” in levels of effort. The United States, in particular, is tied with the United Kingdom in its level of received Chinese influence efforts—and both countries trail only Taiwan.

In this area, the primary lesson global democracies can draw from Taiwan is that, when facing foreign influence attempts, determined NGOs have the capacity to far outstrip any government action. Government restrictions on media—society’s most important watchdog—have worrisome implications, as detailed in [part one](#). Nonprofits, conversely, are agile, decisive, and largely free from such controversy. When properly supported by a highly informed public, civil organizations can go where

the government cannot and innovate where the government is stuck.

Herein lies the most difficult part of implementing this crucial lesson: properly expanding public awareness so as to facilitate the emergence of quality NGOs. In Taiwan's case, public awareness rose semi-autonomously thanks to a series of concrete, highly publicized incidents, such as visible instances of election meddling and [media takeovers](#). Ideally, other nations would preempt those events by building up their defenses before hostile influences over the media environment grow serious. Doing so, however, will require a more proactive, intentional approach to awareness-building.

Conclusion

Taiwan is not a perfectly representative model for the rest of the world, but its experience in combatting hostile influence efforts is valuable. The United States, in particular, faces unique challenges, such as its polarized political climate. Nevertheless, Taiwan's dynamism in fending off PRC media infiltration should serve as a blueprint for all. Taiwan has shown that motivated civilians are a crucially important component of comprehensive national defense. More than almost any other foreign policy challenge, building a media-literate society must begin at the roots, not through top-down government action. Democracies looking to counter PRC media infiltration should focus on nurturing a robust civil sphere and promulgating education about Taiwan, rather than on controlling information.

The main point: In the face of widespread PRC media influence, Taiwan's civil society has developed a range of innovative counter-techniques, gaining valuable insights and experience along the way. The United States—or any nation looking to emulate Taiwan's success—should focus on building public awareness through education, and should look to Taiwan as a valuable model and partner in the ongoing struggle against foreign manipulation.

[1] Many of the following NGOs were studied thanks to the copious amount of information gathered by Freedom House in their [Beijing Global Media Influence Report](#).

[2] “為新聞倫理及新聞專業建立標竿,” translated by author.

[3] *The Reporter* was founded partially by Ho Jungshin (何榮幸), formerly of Want Want Media's *China Times* (中國時報). He resigned after Want Want's attempt to take over China Network Systems (中嘉網路), levying criticism at the company through a

[cryptically worded essay in Apple Daily](#).

Taiwan's Inclusion in the World Health Assembly: A Necessity for Global Health

By: Y. Tony Yang

Y. Tony Yang is an endowed professor and an associate dean at the George Washington University, USA.

The issue surrounding Taiwan's inclusion in global institutions is not a new one, but it has remained deeply contentious and complicated, largely due to longstanding geopolitical tensions. China's assertion that Taiwan is an inalienable part of its sovereign domain has shaped the narrative and decision-making processes in many international forums. Nevertheless, when the sphere of discussion shifts to global health and wellness, the stakes are immeasurably higher. It is during such critical junctures—like the ones created by global health crises and pandemics—that the debate surrounding Taiwan's representation acquires a heightened sense of immediacy. To exclude Taiwan from the [World Health Assembly](#) (WHA), the central deliberative policy-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), goes beyond mere political maneuvering. It's a significant oversight that, given the interconnected nature of today's world, could lead to blind spots in global public health responses.

This debate became even more pronounced in 2023, as Taiwan's aspiration to be a part of the WHA was, once again, met with [refusal](#). The undercurrents of this denial are not hard to discern: China's consistent and unyielding diplomatic efforts to marginalize Taiwan on the world stage. The rationale behind this pressure is China's adamant belief in Taiwan being a constituent part of its territorial expanse. But what this situation glaringly reveals is the sometimes dangerous collision between political considerations and the pressing needs of global health initiatives.

This ongoing tug-of-war between geopolitical interests and public health imperatives is both disheartening and concerning. On one hand, we have the genuine health and welfare needs of Taiwan's population—and, by extension, the international community's health security. On the other hand, there is the shadow of political posturing and the use of international bodies as arenas for power plays. When health emergencies, like pandemics, do not recognize boundaries or political affiliations, the sidelining of any nation—let alone one with a track record like that of Taiwan—can be a detriment to comprehensive glob-

al health strategies.

The recurrent denial of Taiwan's participation illuminates a broader, more pressing concern: Can the world truly afford to let political agendas override the universal and shared goal of public health? As we navigate the intricate dynamics of international relations, it's crucial to remember that health and wellness should transcend politics. The global community stands to benefit when all nations, irrespective of political complexities, come together in a united front against shared health challenges.

The Global Health Perspective

In examining global health through an unbiased lens, Taiwan's consistent absence from the WHA undoubtedly comes across as perplexing and illogical. Taiwan not only boasts an impressive healthcare system equipped with advanced technology and modern infrastructure, but has also demonstrated exceptional capability in navigating health crises. The manner in which Taiwan adeptly [managed and contained](#) the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a testament to its commitment to public health and the well-being of its citizens. Its proven track record in health initiatives, from early detection to effective treatment, makes it an exemplary figure in public health management. Thus, it becomes increasingly confounding as to why an entity that has showcased such remarkable proficiency in health and medical domains remains excluded from a platform as crucial as the WHA. In times of global crises, unity and collaboration among nations are pivotal. We are living in a period where the global community's collective efforts, seamless exchange of knowledge, and unerring support to each other in the domain of healthcare are more critical than ever.

Taiwan's foreign ministry, in expressing its dismay over the WHA's exclusionary decision, was [voicing](#) more than just national sentiments. The resonance of its disappointment and concern is felt far beyond Taiwan's borders, speaking to a universal truth about the importance of inclusive global health strategies. It is not just about the representation of Taiwan's 23.6 million citizens on a global platform; it's a broader reflection of the principles that ought to guide international health policy-making and collaboration. Their pointed and valid critiques of China's recurrent efforts to politicize Taiwan's role in international health forums represents more than a bilateral dispute. It underlines a sentiment that many in the global community share: that the whims and strategies of political maneuverings should never be allowed to eclipse or jeopardize the fundamental objectives of ensuring worldwide public health.

Moreover, sidelining Taiwan, which has invaluable insights and experiences to share—especially regarding its laudable response to the pandemic—deprives the global community of vital knowledge. When the aim is the betterment of global health, every nation's experiences, strategies, and insights should be pooled together for the collective good. And to this end, political considerations should be set aside in favor of prioritizing the larger, more pressing goals of public health, safety, and well-being.

A Historical Flashpoint

At the core of this enduring and highly charged debate is the complex matter of Taiwan's sovereignty, a subject that has been a thorn in the side of international diplomacy for many decades. Beijing's [position](#) on Taiwan has remained unyielding and consistent: it regards the island not as an independent nation, but as a wayward province that broke away and, in its eyes, needs to be reunified with the mainland. This perspective has effectively marginalized Taiwan, leading to its exclusion from a plethora of international assemblies and organizations. Among these exclusions, the one from the WHO emerges as a particularly poignant oversight given the critical nature of global health matters.

By contrast, Taipei, the capital and seat of Taiwan's government, has consistently vocalized its concerns over this ostracization. It maintains that being sidelined from essential international platforms like the WHO hampers its capacity to respond effectively to significant health challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a stark reminder of these challenges—wherein Taiwan, despite its commendable efforts in managing the crisis, felt the brunt of this exclusion in terms of access to timely information and resources. While Beijing often counters such arguments with [promises](#) of "proper arrangements" to ensure Taiwan's inclusion in global health endeavors, the reality that Taiwan faces often paints a different picture.

This disparity between Beijing's public assurances and Taiwan's real-world experiences not only deepens the chasm between the two entities, but also raises pressing questions about the intersection of politics and public health on the world stage. How can political agendas and deeply rooted historical disputes continue to influence decisions that have ramifications for millions of lives? As the world grapples with unprecedented health challenges, the need for inclusivity and collaborative action becomes ever more pronounced, making the Taiwan issue not just a regional concern but a matter of global significance.

A Groundswell of Support

It is of paramount importance to highlight that the clamor for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHA is not a lone voice crying out in the wilderness. A significant number of the WHO's member nations—13 to be exact—have echoed this shared sentiment, and have supported Taiwan's participation as an observer in the Assembly. This substantial number is not a minor detail, but a testament to the international acknowledgment of Taiwan's potential contributions. Yet, the glaring absence of this weighty proposal from the official agenda underscores the profound layers of political intrigue and maneuvering that overshadow global health decisions.

The chorus of support for Taiwan doesn't stop at these 13 nations. It is bolstered by affirmations from some of the world's most influential nations, ringing clear and loud. Both the [United States](#) and [Britain](#), who wield significant clout in international diplomacy, have been unequivocal in their stance. Their disagreement with Taiwan's sidelining is not couched in diplomatic jargon, but expressed with straightforward clarity. The voices of notable figures like Loyce Pace, the US representative to the assembly, and Sajid Javid, the British health minister, add gravitas to this stance. Both of them, representing their respective nations, underscore a widely felt bewilderment: Why is Taiwan, with its commendable health milestones and undeniable successes—especially in times of global crises—being kept at arm's length from the WHA? This paradox seems even more perplexing when juxtaposed with Taiwan's laudable track record in health initiatives, underscoring a broader disconnect between political agendas and global health imperatives.

The Irony of the Assembly's Agenda

Amidst the intricate web of politics and global health discussions, an element of irony emerges starkly in this discourse. The WHA's assembly for 2023—which saw enthusiastic participation from a vast array of nations, and was further underscored by the substantial presence of a delegation from China—aimed to address monumental reforms. At the forefront of these reforms was a crucial agenda item: the possible revamping of the WHO's funding mechanisms. Such a monumental discussion point is of undeniable significance to the global health landscape.

However, what adds a twist to this narrative is the conspicuous absence of Taiwan, which has consistently showcased its commitment and prowess in [healthcare](#). As an influential stakeholder in the realm of public health, its exclusion from such pivotal discussions presents a glaring oversight. The omission of Taiwan's voice, particularly when such foundational matters are on the table, inevitably sparks a cascade of concerns. It makes

observers and stakeholders alike wonder about the true depth, breadth, and inclusivity of the discussions and the eventual outcomes. Can the decisions truly be holistic and reflective of global needs when a key player like Taiwan is left out of the conversation? This underlying question, prompted by Taiwan's absence, further accentuates the tension between political considerations and the genuine pursuit of global health objectives.

Reimagining Global Health Collaborations

Undoubtedly, the nuanced relationship between China and Taiwan is intricately woven into the tapestry of global politics, with China's stance on Taiwan's participation in international forums like the WHA being a testament to the larger Beijing-Taipei dynamics. However, when discussing the core tenets and foundational principles of global organizations, particularly those such as the WHO, it becomes crucial to rise above the fray of political chess games and focus on the larger mission at hand.

At its heart, the WHO was conceived with the overarching [vision](#) of promoting global health, acting as a beacon of guidance, support, and collaboration for all nations. This mission, which centers on the commitment to ensure “the highest possible level of health” for every individual, necessitates a truly inclusive approach that transcends political boundaries and differences. If the WHO remains unwaveringly true to this objective, then the need to bring every stakeholder to the table, no matter the political intricacies and sensitivities at play, becomes an unequivocal imperative.

Moreover, sidelining Taiwan not only risks potential blind spots in global health strategies but also undermines the very essence of what organizations like the WHO aim to achieve. In a world where health challenges know no borders, the inclusivity of all players, irrespective of geopolitical posturing, should be the cornerstone of any genuine effort to advance global health.

Conclusion

In analyzing global health politics, it is evident that the challenges are vast and complex. Overcoming them demands unified, unbiased efforts, transcending political or territorial divides. True public health knows no boundaries and must not be bogged down by bureaucracy or geopolitical disputes. Global well-being mandates a harmonized, dedicated approach. Taiwan's impressive public health achievements highlight its potential contributions. However, exclusion from platforms like the WHA not only limits Taiwan, but also withholds pivotal expertise from global initiatives. In our closely-knit world, where health threats can swiftly span continents, it is essential to incorporate voices like

Taiwan's into global health discussions. Ultimately, inclusivity is not just beneficial for global health—it is its very cornerstone.

The main point: The exclusion of Taiwan from the World Health Assembly (WHA) has raised concerns over the intersection of geopolitics and global health imperatives. Taiwan's commendable health infrastructure and effective handling of crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight the paradox of its absence from critical international health discussions—which are largely due to China's territorial claims over the island. For global health strategies to be truly effective, the international community must prioritize health over politics, ensuring that key contributors like Taiwan are recognized and included in these discussions.