

Geopolitics and Energy Security in Taiwan: A Refined Analysis

Captain Merlin Boone

Taiwan Initiates Its New One-Year Military Conscription Program

John Dotson

Taiwan, Tuvalu, and Uncertainty in the Pacific

Marshall Reid

Diversifying Trade: Where Taiwan Stands Today, and Where It Should Go Tomorrow

Billy Stampfl

Taiwan's Health Diplomacy: Forging Global Connections Beyond Political Barriers

Y. Tony Yang

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By: Captain Merlin Boone

Captain Merlin Boone (US Army) is an instructor of international affairs at the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York.

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Editor's Note: *This is the second of a two-part article series addressing infrastructure security issues in Taiwan's petroleum-based energy sectors. The first article, "[Securing Taiwan's Black Gold: A Crude Analysis](#)," which appeared in our September 6, 2023 issue, identified critical weaknesses in Taiwan's energy security architecture and outlined key phases of production in the petroleum industry. This second article examines processes and vulnerabilities in the latter stages of Taiwan's petroleum supply chain.*

Petroleum is the lifeblood of Taiwan's economy. Refined petroleum products, ranging from gasoline and diesel fuel to fuel oil and lubricants, sustain Taiwan's transportation and industrial sectors. However, recent geopolitical developments—most notably the move by China's People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to [simulate a blockade](#) in retaliation for then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's August 2022 visit to Taiwan—threaten Taiwan's national security and sustainable access to natural resources.

How can Taiwan best protect its oil industry, to include building resiliency and ensuring strategic oil reserves for both military and civilian use? This two-part article series seeks to address these questions by critically reviewing Taiwan's oil supply chain, identifying key vulnerabilities, and offering policy recommendations. Drawing on industry modeling from the American Petroleum Institute, this analysis examines Taiwan's oil industry through six linked phases:

- Production
- Transportation
- Short-Term Storage

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

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- Refining Capacity
- Terminal Capacity
- Point of Use

Phase Four: Refining

After extraction, transport, and short-term storage, crude oil is moved to an oil refinery complex. Within the refinery, crude oil is moved through a network of piping and chemical systems and is transformed into its end-use product. Crude oil can be refined into gasoline, diesel, aviation (jet) fuel, power supply fuel, and manufacturing feedstock (such as petroleum-based lubricants, pharmaceuticals, plastics, organic chemicals, and refined gases).

Taiwan has [three oil refineries](#): CPC Corporation Taiwan’s (CPC, 台灣中油股份有限公司) Taoyuan facility (桃園煉油廠), Formosa Petrochemical Corporation of Formosa Plastics Group’s (FPCC, 台塑石化股份有限公司) Mailiao facility(麥寮煉油廠), and CPC’s Dalin facility (大林煉油廠). These privately managed refineries produce the vast majority of Taiwan’s refined petroleum products (for both public and private use).

Taiwan’s Full Petroleum Refining Capacity

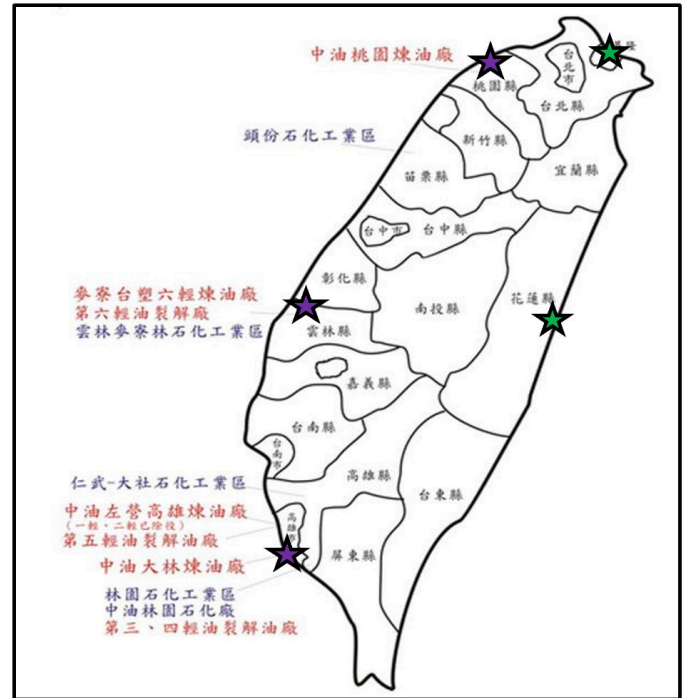
Refinery	Refining Capacity	Notes
Taoyuan Refinery	200,000 barrels/day	
Mailiao Refinery	540,000 barrels/day	Output is composed of naphtha, jet fuel, gasoline, fuel oil, and diesel.
Dalin Refinery	400,000 barrels/day	The refinery maintains offshore pontoons and wharves for both import and export.

Graphic: The production capacities of Taiwan’s three oil refineries. (Data source: [CPC Corporation](#); [Reuters](#))

According to the US Energy Information Administration (an agency of the Department of Energy), it is estimated that Taiwan [consumes nearly 1.1 million barrels per day](#) (mbd) of petroleum, and is capable of refining over 1 mbd at full production capacity. By comparison, Japan [consumes nearly 3.4 mbd](#) of petroleum and is projected to produce less than 3 mbd by 2024, while the United States [consumes 20.0 mbd](#) of petroleum and [produces 20.1 mbd](#). Thus, the output capacity of Taiwan’s refineries is not a strategic risk—instead, it is the geographic location

of these refineries that presents a primary concern.

In the map below (*dating from 2009*), the refineries are marked by purple stars. As should be immediately evident, all three of the facilities are located on Taiwan’s west coast, within a 100 mile radius of Mailiao Township (麥寮鄉) in Yunlin County (雲林縣). While logistically convenient, this arrangement places them well within the range of existing PLA strike assets (air, naval, and ground-based missiles). As such, Taiwan must reconsider the geographical locations of its refineries. [1]



Graphic: Locations of existing oil refineries in Taiwan. The purple stars denote currently operating facilities, while green stars denote potential locations for new facilities. Purple stars listed from north to south: Taoyuan Refinery, Mailiao Refinery, and Dalin Refinery. Green stars listed from north to south: Keelung and Hualien). Note that the map includes the previously active Kaohsiung Refinery (高雄煉油廠), which has since been shut down. (Graphic source: [Taiwan National Museum of Science and Technology](#))

To address this vulnerability, Taiwan should subsidize the development of a fourth refinery on the eastern coastline (possible locations are denoted by the green stars on the graphic above). The development of this new refinery would directly increase Taiwan’s survivability in the event of a militarized cross-Strait conflict, providing three key benefits: 1) supply chain diversification of refined petroleum products; 2) improved supply chain survivability against military action; and 3) reduced transportation costs for east coast-bound petroleum.

Building on the recommendations from [part 1 of this series](#), which called for crude oil shipping routes to shift to the east coast of Taiwan, the government should subsidize the development of a new refinery in the vicinity of either Hualien (花蓮) or Keelung (基隆). More precisely, Taiwan should take advantage of existing transportation, electrical, and logistical infrastructure at the [Port of Keelung](#), its auxiliary port at [Suao \(蘇澳\)](#), or the [Port of Hualien](#). Given these ports' strong connection to Taipei—via [Taiwan's North Link Railway](#), [Tai No.9 Highway](#), and national Coastal Highway—it is clear that these sites are well-connected to transport infrastructure and easily accessible from Taiwan's capital.

It is also important to note two key potential roadblocks to this plan. The first is that this type of subsidization and development of new infrastructure is not currently covered under [Taiwan's Petroleum Administration Act \(石油管理法 \[Article 56\]\)](#). The second problem is that moving Taiwan's above-ground refinery facilities will not reduce their vulnerability to [short-range or medium-range ballistic missiles \(SRBM and MRBM\)](#). Nevertheless, this movement of key infrastructure to the eastern coastline would increase the difficulty of a PLAN blockade, an amphibious invasion, or targeting by PLA strike assets. In terms of a PLAN blockade, this would require a diversion of PLAN assets to the east coast to restrict shipping and refinery operations at the Port of Keelung or Port of Hualien. This additional area of blockade coverage would further expose PLAN assets to shore-based Taiwanese military defense systems. In terms of a land-based invasion, an additional refinery outside the scope of ground operations would enhance Taiwan's military capacity and improve overall energy security resiliency. Finally, PLA longer-range strike assets would be forced to shoot over the Central Mountain Range, providing Taiwan with a longer flight window in which to conduct interdiction and counterfire operations.

Phase Five: Terminal

After transformation at the refinery, petroleum products and refined fuels are transported to terminals. Terminals manage the flow and supply of petroleum into the economy and are the final large-capacity location in the oil supply chain. They are designed for a specific type of petroleum product and vary widely in capacity, design, and management.

Taiwan's [Petroleum Administration Act](#) and [Measure Governing Oil in Emergency Management \(緊急時期石油處置辦法\)](#) are the primary regulations governing the oil industry and its storage of refined petroleum products. [2] The [Petroleum Administration Act's](#) Article 24 directly establishes guidelines for

Taiwan's Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) program for both government and civilian supplies, as follows:

“Oil refinery operators and importers are required to maintain an oil security stockpile of no less than sixty days of supply. The supply amount will be based on the average domestic sales and private consumption of the past twelve months [...] The aforesaid security stockpile, oil refinery's total storage quantity must be no less than 50,000 kiloliters [314,490 barrels], and no less than 10,000 kiloliters [62,898 barrels] for oil importers.

The government should make use of the Petroleum Fund to finance the storage of oil. The amount stored shall be calculated according to thirty days of the average domestic sales and consumption of the previous year.”

In summary, civilian oil refineries are required to store an overall minimum of 314,490 barrels of all of the varied types of petroleum (crude oil, gasoline, light oil, jet fuel, kerosene, diesel oil, and liquefied petroleum gas [LPG]). Though the refineries should plan to store at least 60 days' supply of each type of petroleum based off market sales and consumption (*see Article 56 for military guidelines*), these facilities are run by private organizations and are only periodically inspected by the government [3]. As a result, the responsibilities for monitoring and inspecting this critical national security asset are delegated to commercial entities.

To rectify this shortcoming, the government of Taiwan should develop government managed short-term and long-term national SPR terminals and bases in the Central Mountain Range. [4] While the existing, privatized approach may be more efficient in terms of oil stockpile management, it places the onus of control and responsibility for distribution on existing civilian systems. This would be a significant issue in a militarized conflict, in which civilian stocks may need to be redirected toward government or military use.

In addition to the physical SPR facilities, Taiwan should amend the [Petroleum Administration Act's](#) Article 24 to focus on emergency-use petroleum products more precisely. For example, rather than using a historical consumption model for storage calculation, government planners should determine the actual emergency use requirements for a hypothetical blockade, invasion, or cessation of supplies. This degree of detail would require strategic planning and estimation across sectors and end-users (such as consumer, public, or military). If done effectively, this would allow Taiwan to determine the specific quantities of each refined petroleum type required at each facility. In

turn, this would enable a greater deal of control in the event of a national crisis.

In the absence of such reforms, the government will not be able to conduct up-to-date monitoring of crude oil, refined petroleum, and fuel stocks at each location, as this information is currently controlled and overseen by the commercial importer or refinery. This is a critical information gap on strategic energy security and should be fixed immediately via revised government policy or legislative amendments. While Article 21 of the *Petroleum Administration Act* reserves this right in the event of emergency, it does not begin the planning process ahead of a crisis. [5]

Phase Six: Point of Use

The finished petroleum product is transported from terminals to its final supply chain location. Point of use facilities include fuel stations, airports, power plants, and other consumer-facing locations. This is the smallest-capacity stage and is the final step before transfer to the end-user.

Taiwan has a wide range of point-of-use facilities. This is a critical stage in moving refined petroleum products from the producer to the consumer. However, given the geographic diversity and sheer number of small-scale distribution facilities, this should not be an area of strategic focus for the Taiwanese government.

Conclusion

In the face of rising geopolitical tensions, Taiwan must address critical weaknesses in its national security planning related to energy resources: specifically, a lack of energy security and supply-chain resiliency. First, in the event of cross-Strait military conflict, Taiwan faces extreme limitations in its ability to provide petroleum products for both wartime military and civilian needs due to geographic clustering. Second, its domestic legislation requires reform to enable more effective strategic planning, stockpiling, and preparation. This legislative reform and planning must happen immediately, as the legislative process and physical stockpiling will require significant lead time. If Taiwan can implement these changes, and the government begins to seriously assess the impacts of a long-term strategic PLAN blockade, it may yet improve the overall resiliency and strength of its domestic supply chains.

The main point: Taiwan must address shortcomings in its national energy security and petroleum supply chain by: 1) leading planning, oversight, and management of a strategic petroleum reserve for refined petroleum products; and 2) subsidizing the development of east coast oil refineries and infrastructure.

These improvements would greatly enhance Taiwan's survivability during any future geopolitical conflict.

[1] For related geographical analysis of Taiwan's port infrastructure, see the [first article in this series](#), "Phase Two: Transportation."

[2] In the case of Taiwan, oil is defined as petroleum crude oil, bituminous crude oil, and petroleum.

[3] Per Article 28 of the *Petroleum Administration Act*, "The central competent authority may ask oil refinery operators, importers, exporters, and gasoline/diesel oil wholesalers to report on their operations. The central competent authority may also send personnel or entrust a professional institution conduct an inspection of the actual operations, security stockpile, and relevant data of these businesses. A business may not obstruct, refuse, or evade such inspection."

[4] See the [first article in this series](#), "Phase Three: Short Term Storage."

[5] For an example of the importance of securing oil production amid conflict, see: Rosemary Kelanic, *Oil Security and Conventional War* (Council on Foreign Relations, October 15, 2013), <https://www.cfr.org/report/oil-security-and-conventional-war>.

Taiwan Initiates Its New One-Year Military Conscription Program

By: John Dotson

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

The issue of conscripted military service has long been a contentious matter in Taiwan, where, despite the serious and growing threat posed by the People's Republic of China (PRC), [military service is widely unpopular](#) among young people. As a result, the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) armed forces have historically [struggled to attract enough volunteer recruits](#) to man the ranks. During the 2010s, Taiwan's government repeatedly reduced the period of required compulsory service for young men, first from first two years down to one, and then from one year to four months, where it has stood since 2017. The four-month term of service has been criticized by critics both within and outside of Taiwan as woefully inadequate, with many derid-

ing it as a “summer camp” experience that [lacked rigorous and meaningful training](#) for most recruits. Furthermore, the lack of follow-up obligations—reservists were only required to perform five to seven days of refresher training on alternate years, with the refresher training itself broadly criticized as inadequate, and deferments widely available—further led critics to question its value.

This lack of an effective conscription and reserve management program to back up Taiwan’s active-duty volunteer force in the event of a major crisis is one of the significant factors that has led many to argue that [Taiwan was failing to provide for its own defense](#). However, in December 2022, the administration of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) [officially announced](#) its plans to extend the island’s program of mandatory conscription and military training for young men back to one year of required service. (For a fuller discussion of the issues associated with conscripted service, and the provisions of the plan announced in December 2022, see the earlier Global Taiwan Brief article “[Taiwan’s ‘Military Force Restructuring Plan’ and the Extension of Conscripted Military Service](#)” [February 8, 2023].)

As of January 2024, the new one-year program of conscripted service has entered into effect, and the first cohorts of affected young men (the conscription program is male-only, [although women serve in the active-duty military](#)) reported for basic training. While much about the provisions of the program remains unclear, the Ministry of National Defense (MND, 國防部) has released some details about the planned implementation of the new one-year program. These provisions of the program, and what they portend for Taiwan’s overall defense structure, will be examined in this article.



Image: ROC Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Chen Chien-yi speaking at a press conference on January 16, in which he briefed reporters on aspects of the military’s new one-year conscription program. (Image source: [ROC Ministry of National Defense](#))

The MND’s Announcements about the New Training Program

On January 16, ROC Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General (Lt-Gen.) Chen Chien-yi (陳建義) was the featured speaker at an MND press conference, during which he presented a briefing—titled the “[One Year Mandatory Military Service Training and Re-organizing Survey](#)” (一年期義務役入伍接訓整備概況)—on the provisions of the new program. LtGen. Chen stated that the training program for conscripts had been developed based on iterations of the eight-week basic training course for active-duty soldiers conducted between April – August 2023, and that 900 personnel (presumably consisting primarily of non-commissioned officers) had qualified as trainers to supervise the more rigorous training of new recruits from January 2024 onwards. He provided some basic figures for the program, as follows:

- The first cohort of new recruits would report for training on January 25 (see image below).
- There would be 12 training cohorts (梯次) this year, with the first cohort containing 670 personnel.
- 9,127 recruits were projected to be drafted this year—with the majority (7,514) going into the ROC Army, with the others to be assigned to the other branches of the armed forces.
- Five main training units had been identified for the army recruits, including the 206th Infantry Brigade (Hsinchu—north region), 302nd Brigade (Taichung—central region), and 203rd Brigade (Tainan—southern region).
- NTD \$4.04137 billion (approximately USD \$129.68 million) had been allocated for the years 2023-2025 for training facilities upgrades and quality-of-life (barracks, etc.) upgrades.

LtGen. Chen’s briefing described the intent of this “from civilian transforming to soldier” (由民轉軍) program as preparing recruits to “follow orders, identify with the country, to be loyal and patriotic” (服從命令、認同國家、忠貞愛國), and to “carry out assignments at the squad level and below” (能接受班以下任務式指揮). The eight-week basic training program is to be structured as follows:

- Phase One (week one)—“Soldier’s Core Values” (軍人核心價值): In-processing, political instruction in military core values and patriotic awareness, and introduction to basic physical fitness.
- Phase Two (weeks two-five)—“Fundamentals Training” (基

礎訓練): Basic weapons training and marksmanship.

- Phase Three (weeks six-seven)—“Advanced Combined Training” (進階暨訓練): More advanced combat training, including night training. Week six will also include selections for the recruit’s military specialty; for those who do not receive a specialty designation, they will receive a unit assignment in week seven.
- Phase Four (week eight)—“Final Evaluation” (期末鑑測): Final recruit assessment of physical training, weapons handling, and a sequence of “3-day / 2-night comprehensive combat training” (三天二夜綜合戰鬥教練). Recruits who fail the final assessment will be recycled for an additional week of training. [1]



Image: “One Year Compulsory Military Service New Soldiers Say It Isn’t So Terrible”—a photo from a government news agency report about some of the first conscripts reporting for training duty (at the ROC Army base at Cheng-gong-ling, Taichung) under the MND’s extended one-year conscription program (January 25). (Image source: [CNA](#))

With the first cohorts of conscripts under the new program reported to their training facilities, the MND has clearly taken pains to present to the public a message that the new recruits are being well cared-for. This reflects a lingering concern for the armed forces, whose image—and the public’s view of military service—have been damaged by past instances of alleged hazing or abusive discipline, including an incident that resulted in the [death of a soldier by heatstroke in 2013](#). As an example of this messaging effort, the state-affiliated media outlet *Central News Agency* (CNA, 中央社) ran a [story profiling the induction process](#) at the ROC Army training facility at Cheng-gong-ling (成功嶺新訓中心), Taichung, which featured a brief interview with a new recruit who stated: “[Before reporting] I was a little perturbed [...] but after I arrived at Cheng-gong-ling, I found that everything here was very tidy and orderly, and the officers were

not as terrible as I had heard from the previous generation.”

The Intended Employment of Conscript Soldiers

The government’s December 2022 [announcement](#) of the future “[Strengthening All-People’s Defense Military Force Restructuring Plan](#)” (強化全民國防兵力結構調整方案, called the “Military Force Realignment Plan” in the government’s own English-language communications) laid out four broad categories of duty for military servicemembers: the “main battle troops” of the volunteer active-duty force; conscripted “garrison troops,” whose duties would be focused on facilities protection and territorial defense; the “civil defense system”; and the “reserve system” for military reservists. [2] The December 2022 materials indicated that the service of the one-year conscripts would be directed primarily toward the second category of “garrison troops” (and presumably shifting to the fourth category once their obligatory year of service ended).

The [MND’s January 2024 briefing](#) appeared to confirm this intended orientation for the one-year conscripts once they complete initial training. The briefing did not cover follow-on training in a military occupational specialty (MOS), although this would presumably be the case for at least some soldiers (those whom, as noted, receive such a designation in basic training week six). It did indicate that, following training, they would be assigned “to the garrison troops (守備部隊) in the main or outer islands based on the area of their registered place of residence.” On a voluntary basis, training graduates may elect to serve with one of the “main battle” units of active-duty troops, where their duties and continued training would presumably be more rigorous.

LtGen. Chen’s briefing was very much focused on the role of recruits in the ROC Army, and did not dwell upon the roughly 1,600 recruits (approximately 20 percent) of this year’s draftees who would be assigned to the other branches of the armed forces. However, his brief did contain a slide that indicated paths for conscripted troops to serve in “guard platoons” (戒護排) of the navy, air force, and MND Information, Communications and Electronic Force Command (ICEFCOM, 國防部資通電軍), as well as for service with the military police (憲兵). (The small ROC Marine Corps appeared to be left out of plans for conscript augmentation.) This appears to indicate that draftees assigned to the other services will also perform in a primary “garrison troop” role of providing sentries for fixed facilities—perhaps allowing volunteer active-duty personnel to focus their efforts on more specialized command functions. However, this remains unclear, and further time will be required to see how such divi-

sions of work responsibilities play themselves out.

Conclusions

The late 2022 announcement by the Tsai Administration regarding the extension of conscripted military service for young men—a controversial decision that cost the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨)-led government critical political capital in the lead-up to an election year—was implemented on schedule in January of this year. This marks both a significant social change in Taiwan, and a potentially substantial increase in the manpower available to the [understrength ROC armed forces](#). With the victory of current Vice-President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) in the January 13 presidential election, the policy is almost certain to continue under the incoming administration (although conflicts over defense appropriations could well emerge under the new [Legislative Yuan speakership of Han Kuo-yu](#) [韓國瑜]).

Taiwan's MND is attempting to create a larger body of soldiers (and they are primarily soldiers, as opposed to sailors or airmen) who have received an introduction to military organization and discipline, and at least rudimentary training in weapons usage and small-unit infantry tactics. The seeming intent to employ the conscript soldiers primarily in a facilities security role is unlikely to develop those skills further; however, it would at least provide a minimal baseline for such skills, should they ever be required later. Furthermore, the additional manpower provided for essential—but relatively uncomplicated—tasks such as guard duty and unskilled labor could free up time and resources for longer-serving volunteer enlisted personnel to dedicate themselves to more advanced training and professional development.

The new one-year program should help to address, at least in part, the legitimate criticisms from both domestic and foreign critics that Taiwan has not allocated sufficient resources and social capital toward its own defense. It could also help to potentially increase the value of deterrence efforts in the face of a potential PRC invasion. (It is no accident that, throughout Europe's violent 20th century, potential aggressors steered clear of Switzerland and its well-regulated, universal-service, citizen-reserve army.) However, much about the new program remains unclear, including the extent of follow-on military specialty training and the degree to which such soldiers might be integrated into the larger force, as well as how personnel will be distributed to services other than the ROC Army. Perhaps most importantly of all, it remains to be seen whether the MND will implement an effective program of reserve force management and refresher

training for conscript soldiers once they are released from their one-year term of active-duty service.

While the move to one year of service remains a limited measure in light of the existential threat Taiwan faces, it is a significant step in the right direction—and one of a number of positive steps, to include major increases in the defense budget, made under the cognizance of the Tsai Administration. The specifics as to how the new conscription program plays itself out through the rest of 2024 will be well worth watching.

The main point: In January, Taiwan's government followed through with plans to initiate a new, extended program (from four months, to one year) of obligatory conscripted military service for young men. Most of the new recruits will be directed to service in the ROC Army, with follow-on duty in the “garrison troops”—performing facilities security and rear-echelon service—as defined by the government's plan released in late 2022. The new program represents a significant social change, and could provide substantial additional manpower to the understrength ROC armed forces.

[1] The briefing indicated that recruits who still failed the comprehensive assessment after this would not receive a “specialty certificate” (專長證書) (*no further details provided*), and would not receive the NTD \$10,800 (USD \$346) “specialist bonus” (專業加給) allotted to training graduates. It is unclear whether this would then affect their subsequent military duty status.

[2] The four categories are: (1) “Main Battle Troops” (主戰部隊): The volunteer personnel of the active-duty military (currently manned at approximately 155,000, with a desired goal of 210,000), who will bear the primary burden of any potential future front-line fighting; (2) “Garrison Troops” (守備部隊): Comprised predominantly of conscripted (“mandatory service”) personnel, these soldiers will be oriented primarily towards infrastructure protection and territorial defense; (3) the “Civil Defense System” (民防系統): “Alternative service personnel” (presumably, to include those deferred from combat service due to medical, conscientious, or other reasons) who are to be integrated into a public-private partnership system for disaster relief, medical services, and other aspects of civil defense, as well as for unspecified, but presumably logistical, military support operations; and (4) the “Reserve System” (後備系統): A revamped system for military reservists, intended to “replenish our main battle force with retired volunteer soldiers, and our garrison force with former mandatory servicemembers.” (See: “President Tsai Announces Military Force Realignment Plan,”

ROC President's Office, Dec. 27, 2022, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6417>.)

Taiwan, Tuvalu, and Uncertainty in the Pacific

By: Marshall Reid

Marshall Reid is the program manager at GTI, as well as the host of GTI's podcast, GTI Insights.

For Taiwan, the beginning of 2024 has been exceptionally eventful. Domestically, it held yet another successful national election—in which the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨) was [elected for an unprecedented third consecutive presidential term](#), while the opposition Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) secured a [plurality of seats in the legislature](#) and the [legislative speakership](#). On January 15, just two days after the Taiwanese election, the government of Nauru [announced](#) that it would be switching its diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the People's Republic of China (PRC). Despite Nauru's small size—by population, it is the world's third-smallest nation—the move was nonetheless a painful one for Taipei, which has seen its list of formal diplomatic partners shrink significantly in recent years. For a nation that has long viewed such partnerships as inextricably linked with [domestic and international legitimacy](#), the switch represented yet another step toward an intolerable state of formal isolation.

Unfortunately for Taiwan, its difficulties in the Pacific Islands may not yet be over. On January 26, Tuvalu—an archipelagic nation of just over 11,000 people located roughly 1,000 miles to Nauru's southeast—held its own [general elections](#). In the aftermath of the contest, much remains uncertain, as Tuvalu's Parliament has yet to select a new prime minister. However, early results suggest that Taiwan's partnership with the island republic may be in jeopardy, with current Prime Minister Kausea Natano—a reliable supporter of Taiwan in the region—losing his legislative seat. While Natano's successor is by no means guaranteed to follow Nauru's lead, the election has nevertheless exposed the delicate state of Taiwan's diplomatic position in the Pacific Island states, as well as the growing presence of the PRC in the region.

Taiwan-Tuvalu Connections

For Taiwan, the Pacific Islands region has historically been a stronghold of diplomatic support. Until 2019, the vast, ocean-

ic area was home to six of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, many of which maintained long and productive partnerships with Taipei. Despite its small size—even relative to other Pacific Island states—Tuvalu has been perhaps Taiwan's most reliable partner in the region. Since 1979, soon after Tuvalu's independence from the United Kingdom, the two have built a remarkably durable and consistent [relationship](#), even as the PRC has steadily whittled away at Taiwan's other Pacific partnerships.

For both Taipei and Funafuti (Tuvalu's capital and largest city), this bilateral relationship has brought a range of benefits. In the case of Tuvalu, Taiwan has long been a source of vital aid, investment, and trade, with Taipei providing around [USD \\$12 million](#) in annual support for the island nation. For Tuvalu, the [most aid-dependent nation](#) in the world, this support has been instrumental in fueling development and sustaining economic growth. In perhaps the most visible instance of Taiwanese assistance to Tuvalu, Taipei provided approximately USD \$10 million in funding for the construction of a [new parliament house](#) in Funafuti, with construction commencing in late 2023.



Image: Taiwan's Ambassador to Tuvalu Andrew Lin (林東亨) attends a "drilling ceremony" for a new parliament house in Tuvalu, funded primarily by Taiwan. (Image source: [Taiwan Embassy in Tuvalu](#))

In recent years, Taiwan's government has taken a more targeted, needs-based approach to its aid programs, abandoning the more indiscriminate funding of the past. Under President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), Taiwan has sought to emphasize its credentials as an advanced democracy, leveraging its expertise and experience to expand its existing partnerships. As one of Taipei's few remaining allies, Tuvalu has been a direct beneficiary of these efforts. According to Taiwan's [International Cooperation and Development Fund](#) (TaiwanICDF, 財團法人國際合作發展基金會), Taiwan has implemented a variety of programs in Tuvalu, including projects focusing on medical personnel training, agricultural practices, and disaster resilience. More broadly,

Taipei has recently partnered with the United States to [improve economic prospects](#) for women in Taiwan's Pacific Island allies, including Tuvalu.

In implementing these programs, Taiwan has also worked to [present itself](#) as a free and open alternative to China's more opaque authoritarianism. In a [statement](#) released prior to the Tuvaluan election, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 中華民國外交部) stressed the many values it shares with Tuvalu, including "freedom, democracy, human rights, and rule of law." In a further effort to play up its similarities with Tuvalu and other Pacific Island states, Taiwan has also sought to accentuate its [historical, ethnological, and linguistic ties to the region](#), centering this campaign on Taiwan's generally accepted role as the birthplace of the Austronesian peoples that later colonized the islands of the Pacific. Taiwan's [Council of Indigenous Peoples](#) (CIP, 原住民族委員會) has played an instrumental part in these efforts, working to build ties between indigenous communities in Taiwan and Tuvalu.

For Taiwan, such investment in—and engagement with—Tuvalu provides a variety of benefits. Perhaps most importantly, Tuvalu has consistently served as a strong advocate for Taiwan on the international stage, pushing for Taiwanese involvement in [international organizations](#) and touting Taiwan's many accomplishments. Moreover, the recent efforts to provide targeted assistance to Tuvalu have provided Taiwan with an opportunity to showcase its humanitarian contributions and highlight its technical expertise. More symbolically, Tuvalu stands as one of Taiwan's last remaining formal partners, a distinction that grants it outsized importance in the Taiwanese psyche. Small as it may be, Tuvalu remains a crucial source of national legitimacy for Taipei. Unfortunately for Taiwan, however, it is not alone in attaching symbolic power to such diplomatic partnerships.

China on the Rise

As many [experts](#) have noted, Taiwan's network of Pacific diplomatic relationships have come under severe pressure in recent years. Over the past decade, the PRC has poured considerable resources into the Pacific Islands region. Taking advantage of declining [US influence in the region](#), Beijing has rapidly expanded its presence in Pacific Island states, leveraging its vast economy to apply pressure and exert influence. As [Aleksandra Gadzala Tirziu](#) has argued, these efforts often follow a "predictable pattern," in which China funds highly visible, ostentatious projects (such as stadiums and government facilities), frequently accompanied by investments in infrastructure projects (such as ports and airstrips). These investments are often supplemented

by [outreach to key political elites](#), with the aim of cultivating pro-China factions within regional governments and placing pressure on holdouts.

While these efforts are likely motivated by a variety of factors—from economic diversification to power projection—a desire to further isolate Taiwan is certainly toward the top of the list. Since 2016, when Tsai was first elected, China has engaged in a global campaign to marginalize Taipei whenever possible, typically by using its influence to chip away at the island democracy's shrinking list of diplomatic partners. Given the comparatively large number of these allies in the region, it is perhaps no surprise that the Pacific Islands have emerged as a key battleground in this confrontation.

Despite Taiwan's best efforts, the PRC influence campaign in the region has proven largely successful. Just since 2019, Taiwan has now lost three Pacific allies ([Kiribati](#) and [Solomon Islands](#) in 2019, and now Nauru in 2024), leaving it with just three formal partners in the area (Tuvalu, Palau, and the Marshall Islands). As [Joel Atkinson](#) has noted, China has successfully peeled away the most populous and "prestigious" of Taiwan's regional partners, leaving it with three of the smallest and least influential. This pattern was likely intentional, as Beijing almost assuredly targeted nations whose defection would cause the most pain to Taiwan. However, with these primary objectives achieved, the PRC has now turned its eyes to Taipei's last remaining tethers to the region.

Elections in Tuvalu

Against this contentious backdrop, it is perhaps inevitable that Tuvalu's 2024 elections received unprecedented international attention. From the outset, the competition was [framed](#) by many observers as a referendum on the nation's relationship with Taiwan. While some of these commentaries were somewhat overwrought, Tuvalu-Taiwan ties were indeed a key factor in the elections, with candidates across the archipelago mentioning Taiwan in their official platforms. These discussions gained even more salience in the wake of Nauru's switch, as many international commentators [speculated](#) that the election could presage a similar move by Tuvalu in the near future.

Unfortunately for observers hoping for a quick, decisive end to this speculation, the final results of Tuvalu's election have yet to fully materialize. This delay is largely a product of the country's [unique electoral system](#), which is heavily influenced by traditional clan relationships and regional alliances. In each election, each of Tuvalu's eight constituencies select two representatives to send to the national parliament. Once this process is com-

pleted, the 16 members of parliament are sent by boat to Funafuti—a [trip](#) which takes approximately 27 hours—where they select a member from their ranks to serve as prime minister. Notably, Tuvalu has no political parties, so the selection process for prime minister is often contentious and defined by personal allegiances. As a result of this idiosyncratic system, the naming of a prime minister frequently occurs days or weeks after the election itself.

As previously mentioned, January’s election resulted in current Prime Minister [Kausea Natano](#) losing his seat in the Funafuti constituency, meaning that a new leader will be chosen from the incoming parliament. For Taiwan, this is a less-than-ideal outcome. While Natano was relatively silent on the Taiwan partnership during the early days of his tenure—indeed, his election in 2019 was [described](#) as “a potential blow for Taiwan”—he has since distinguished himself as a steadfast supporter of the partnership. In the wake of his ouster, Taiwan once again faces an uncomfortable uncertainty about its future in the archipelago.

Though it remains unclear who will succeed Natano, a small field of candidates has emerged to fill the void. For Taiwan, the most concerning of these contenders is current Minister of Finance [Seve Paeniu](#), who retained his seat in the 2024 election. Unlike many of his rivals, Paeniu has been far more circumspect in his discussions of Taiwan, pledging only that he would “review” the country’s ties with Taipei. More concerningly for Taiwan, Paeniu has also discussed China as a potential partner, [stating](#) that “[i]t comes down to whichever partner country is able to respond to and support achievement of Tuvalu’s development priorities and aspirations.” Based on these comments, many [observers](#) have prognosticated that a government under Paeniu’s leadership may be more amenable to switching recognition.

By contrast, Paeniu’s two leading opponents are far more supportive of maintaining ties with Taiwan. Enele Sopoaga, who served as prime minister from 2013-19, has long been an advocate for Taiwan. In recent [remarks](#) to Taiwan’s *Central News Agency* (CNA, 中央通訊社), Sopoaga stated that “You can read my lips. Yes. I will not make even the slightest change [to the relationship with Taiwan]. There is no need even to look at that issue right now.” Similarly, current Minister for Justice, Communication, & Foreign Affairs Simon Kofe has frequently [expressed support](#) for the Tuvalu-Taiwan partnership, including [meeting with President Tsai](#) in June 2023.

A Murky Future

For Taiwan, the 2024 Tuvalu elections seem to be something of a mixed bag. While Taipei lost a staunch supporter in Prime

Minister Natano, the majority of potential successors appear likely to follow his example. Even Seve Paeniu, framed by some as the “pro-China” candidate, has merely alluded to a vague “review” of the relationship. However, as Nauru’s sudden switch has made painfully clear, Taiwan cannot afford to be complacent if it intends to maintain its partnership with Tuvalu. China’s intentions in the region are self-evident, and any future Tuvaluan prime minister will undoubtedly face intense pressure from Beijing. Tuvalu is by no means guaranteed to follow Nauru’s example, but Taiwan’s diplomats will likely need to be proactive in pushing back against China’s pressure and reassuring their Tuvaluan partners.

The main point: In the wake of Nauru’s switch in recognition to the PRC, many observers framed the 2024 Tuvaluan election as a prelude to another painful defection. While Taiwan lost a key supporter in the election, a Tuvaluan switch is certainly not guaranteed.

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Diversifying Trade: Where Taiwan Stands Today, and Where It Should Go Tomorrow

By: Billy Stampfl

Billy Stampfl is currently a second-year student at the University of Michigan Law School.

Taiwan’s economy is highly dependent on international trade, with net exports driving the country’s 21st-century growth. But despite its important role in economic development, an overreliance on trade poses significant national security concerns. Taiwan’s dependence on the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the island’s top trade partner, makes it vulnerable to Chinese pressure campaigns. Some cite this concern in arguing that Taiwan should “decouple” from China, seeking to trade less with Beijing and more with countries like the United States, Japan, and Australia. This approach would also weaken China, which relies on Taiwan for intermediate goods—most prominently, [semiconductors](#)—to drive its own manufacturing sector.

But Taiwan’s trade-related problems do not end with China. Taiwanese exports are far too concentrated, with semiconductor chips and related materials comprising a [disproportionate segment](#) of total exports. Such overdependence on a single sector poses risks to Taiwan’s national and economic security, suggest-

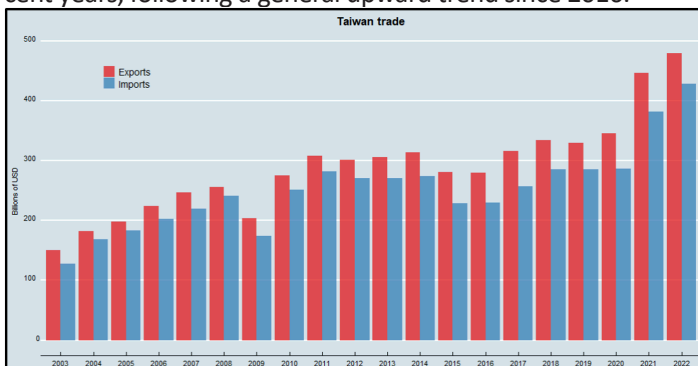
ing that Taipei should diversify not only its trading partners, but its exports, too.

The question, then, is how Taiwan can more effectively use trade to protect itself, safeguard its economy, and enlarge its global footprint. This article offers specific suggestions, centered on two points in particular: 1) reducing Taiwan's reliance on China, which currently makes up 40 percent of the island's total goods exports; and 2) diversifying Taiwan's portfolio of goods exports, which is overly focused on machinery and electrical equipment. Although Taiwan has taken some steps in addressing these points, it should act now to achieve broader-based, sustainable diversification.

Why Trade Matters to Taiwan

With a relatively small domestic consumer base of 23 million people, Taiwan's export-import sector has long powered its economy. The island's trade-to-GDP ratio, an indicator of how relevant trade is to a country's growth, was [127 percent](#) in the fourth quarter of 2022—much larger than that of China (less than [40 percent](#)) and the US ([25 percent](#)). Taiwan consistently ranks among the world's [top export economies](#).

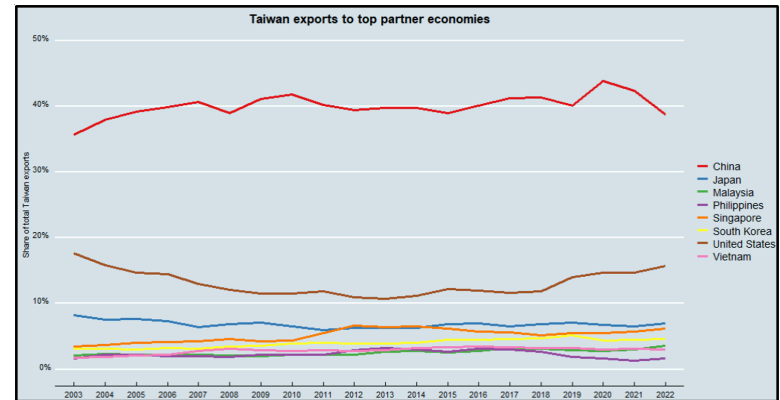
Moreover, trade in manufactured goods is only becoming more central as a catalyst of Taiwanese growth. According to [data](#) promoted by Taiwan's Ministry of Finance (財政部), Taiwanese exports and imports of goods have increased significantly in recent years, following a general upward trend since 2016.



Graphic 1: Taiwanese imports and exports of goods, 2003-2022. (Data source: Taiwan Ministry of Finance)

Taiwan's Top Trade Partners

China remains Taiwan's top export partner, receiving nearly 40 percent of the island's exported goods. Though the share of goods sent west across the Taiwan Strait has fallen since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwanese exports are still highly focused on the Chinese marketplace.



Graphic 2: Top destinations for Taiwanese exports, 2003-2022. (Data source: Taiwan Ministry of Finance)

Taiwanese goods imports are significantly less concentrated, as China is not as dominant in this realm: Taiwan imports only one-fifth of its goods from across the Strait. Still, in the last two decades, Japan has declined as an importer of Taiwanese goods while the United States has stayed steady. Beijing has filled in the resultant gaps, rising from just 10 percent of Taiwanese goods imports in 2003 to 20 percent last year.

Taiwan's Trade in Goods

Taiwan is heavily reliant on exports of machinery and electrical equipment and far less active in outward trade in other categories of goods, including base metals, plastics, and chemical products. This emphasis has only intensified in the past decade.



Graphic: Taiwan's top export categories, 2003-2022. (Data source: Taiwan Ministry of Finance)

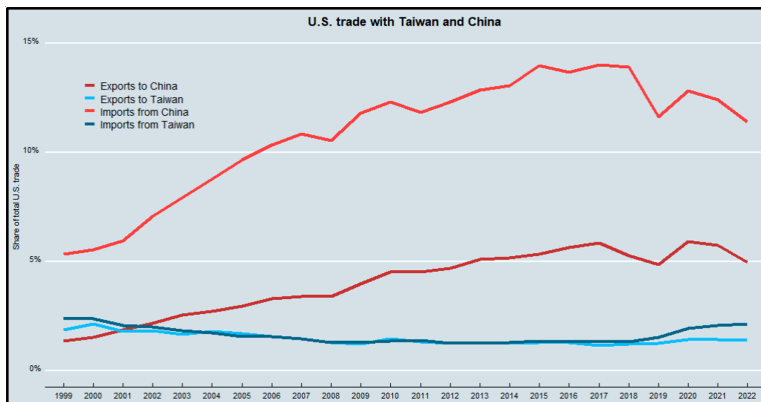
Machinery and electrical equipment is also Taiwan's most popular import class—it covered nearly half of all goods imports in 2022—though Taiwanese importers have demanded more mineral products (20 percent of import goods in 2022) since the pandemic.

Next Steps

Given this snapshot of Taiwanese trading patterns, an important question follows: how can Taiwan use trade to protect itself from a Chinese invasion, strengthen its domestic economy, and enhance its global standing?

Taiwan Should Expand Trade to Export Partners besides China

Partner diversification is key. First, Taiwan should continue to pursue trade with the United States, to which it exported 18 percent of its goods in 2022. For their part, US businesses have [reduced their trade](#) with China since 2020, and Taiwan can help fill the void. Doing so would boost its own economy, remind the United States of Taiwan's integral role in the global economy, and offer Washington an additional reason to defend Taipei against Chinese aggression.



Graphic: US trade with Taiwan and China, 1999-2022. (Data source: [US Bureau of Economic Analysis](#))

On this front, the [US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade First Agreement Implementation Act](#) of 2023 is a meaningful start. Signed by President Joseph Biden last August, this law covers relevant trade issues like good regulatory practices, small- and medium-sized enterprises, anticorruption, and multinational cooperation. Though it generates no new market-access commitments, it demonstrates the United States' interest in bolstering ties with Taipei.

But the [21st-Century Trade First Agreement Implementation Act](#) is not just a sign that Congress and the Biden Administration are open to further agreements with Taiwan. It also makes such agreements more likely by outlining requirements for future negotiations and creating binding commitments for both governments to reduce trade barriers. Taiwan should take advantage of this pact by increasing its trade with the United States, particularly as both countries seek to lessen their reliance on China.

Further, Taiwan should use the 2023 US-Taiwan trade agreement as momentum for further progress on other priorities,

including its application to join the [Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) (CPTPP). Signed in 2018 as an effort to reduce tariffs and facilitate trade between member states, the CPTPP has 11 members, including Australia, Canada, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, and Great Britain. Both Taiwan and China have applied for membership. Taiwan's acceptance—in the face of Chinese opposition—would help it diversify its partner portfolio by boosting exports to Australia, Japan, and other CPTPP states.

Taiwan has begun lobbying existing member states for membership (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), and it should continue its efforts to convince CPTPP countries that Taiwanese involvement would bolster economic security and supply-chain resilience in the Indo-Pacific region. Naysayers will point to Chinese opposition as the chief reason that Taiwan's application will be rejected, but precedent exists for a different result: in 2001, Taiwan lobbied to join the World Trade Organization at the same time as China and was accepted a mere 21 days after Beijing.

Taiwan should also remind existing CPTPP members of the downsides of letting China in. Beijing has ongoing territorial disputes with other members, including Japan, Malaysia, Brunei, and Vietnam; it has employed economic coercion to pressure CPTPP nations like Canada, Japan, and Australia; and it is already facing sanctions from countries like Canada for alleged human rights violations. Paired with Taiwan's general compliance with the rules-based international order, these concerns suggest that Taiwan could leverage China as a foil, strengthening its own case for joining the CPTPP.

Taiwan Should Lessen Its Dependence on Exports of Semiconductor-Related Materials

Taiwan is the world's leading producer of microchips, exporting USD [\\$164 billion](#) annually, almost one quarter of the global supply. These chips are essential for the production of electronic devices and machinery, from cars and smartphones to fighter jets.

Why is Taiwan's reliance on chip-making risky? First, the semiconductor chip race has the [United States](#), [China](#), and [many European countries](#) eager to establish their own technological prowess. These efforts could threaten Taiwan's dominance in the industry, especially if the United States continues its efforts to onshore its chip development and production. Second, over-reliance on the high-tech sector in general is economically unwise, for it risks benefiting the high-skilled upper class—more likely to see their wages rise as tech firms increase their prof-

its—at the expense of the middle and lower classes.

Given these concerns, Taiwan should push for greater economic diversification. A [2023 analysis](#) from Harvard’s Growth Lab identified industries in specific Taiwanese cities that represent opportunities for diversification. Examples include Hsinchu, Tainan, and Changhua City for photographic equipment; Taipei for chemical manufacturing; and various metro areas for sectors like apparel manufacturing, telecommunications, and textiles. The analysis also explores Taiwan’s strategic goal of positioning itself as a worldwide hub for pioneering research into biomedical and life sciences, which would allow the island to use its tech expertise to further diversify its exports.

In conclusion, Taiwan’s technological and trading prowess has given the island of 23 million people economic influence that far exceeds its size. Still, Taipei should consider diversifying its export portfolio to be less reliant on China and semiconductor materials. The *21st-Century Trade First Agreement Implementation Act* is a step in the right direction, but more must be done—and concrete actions like joining the CPTPP and investing in sectors unrelated to semiconductors are two priorities that would make Taiwanese trade more resilient and sustainable.

The main point: Taiwan is a trade-driven economy whose goods are disproportionately exported to China, which routinely uses this economic dependence to exert political leverage. Taiwan should thus diversify its international commercial ties. Further, Taiwan’s export-import sector is also overly concentrated on trade in semiconductors. Though it would be foolish to make the Taiwanese economy less complex and technologically advanced, enhanced proficiencies in other industries would enhance Taiwan’s resiliency and make its economy more robust.

Taiwan’s Health Diplomacy: Forging Global Connections Beyond Political Barriers

By: Y. Tony Yang

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

The recent memoranda of understanding (MOUs) signed between Taiwan and several countries—including [the Czech Republic](#), [the United Kingdom](#), and [Canada](#)—represent a significant stride in Taiwan’s international presence, particularly in the realm of healthcare. These agreements are not just diplomatic feats; they are strategic steps toward making Taiwan a globally

recognized player in health and medical innovation. In a world where health crises transcend national borders, Taiwan’s proactive engagement in health diplomacy is both timely and imperative. This brief will argue that by enhancing its visibility and relevance in global health, Taiwan can significantly increase its international presence, despite the political challenges posed by China’s attempts to isolate it.

Taiwan’s Diplomatic Landscape and the Need for Health Diplomacy

Taiwan’s unique international status, complicated by China’s influence, has often restricted its participation in global affairs, especially in organizations like the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO). However, health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic have underscored the necessity of inclusive global health frameworks. Taiwan’s remarkable handling of the pandemic, despite its exclusion from the WHO, has highlighted its potential as a valuable contributor to global health.

By focusing on health diplomacy, Taiwan can circumvent some of the political roadblocks it faces. Health is a universal concern, transcending political affiliations and ideologies. Taiwan’s investments in healthcare, medical research, and public health can serve as a platform for international cooperation, enabling it to forge relationships—even with countries that officially adhere to some form of a “One-China Policy” that prevents formal diplomatic relations with both Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

The Strategic Significance of Recent MOUs

Taiwan-Czech MOU: A Model of Democratic Solidarity

In December 2023, Taiwan and the Czech Republic signed an [MOU](#) targeting the reconstruction of Ukraine’s primary healthcare system. Critically, the agreement represents a multifaceted approach to international relations, blending health, humanitarianism, and democratic solidarity. This MOU transcends conventional diplomatic engagement, forging a path for Taiwan in the global arena, especially in terms of humanitarian aid and health diplomacy.

The MOU, signed amid the ongoing [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#), is a beacon of hope for a Ukrainian society ravaged by war. Ambassador Ke Liang-ruey (柯良叡) and David Steinke, representing Taiwan and the Czech Republic respectively, have accomplished far more than merely signing an agreement. Rather, they have laid the groundwork for a significant partnership based on shared democratic values and humanitarian principles. This collaboration is particularly notable considering the geographical

and political distances separating Taiwan, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine.

Taiwan Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs [Tien Chung-kwang's](#) (田中光) remarks during the signing highlighted the MOU as a prime example of democratic nations uniting against authoritarian threats. This agreement goes beyond bilateral relations; it is emblematic of the development of a broader coalition of democracies committed to upholding humanitarian principles. Tien's emphasis on the project reinforced the democratic world's commitment to supporting Ukraine, demonstrating the potential impact of concerted efforts by like-minded nations.

The MOU also brings to light the economic strengths and technological capabilities of Taiwan. In recognition of this, Czech Envoy for the Reconstruction of Ukraine Tomáš Kopečný and Director of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Economic Policy Department Marek Svoboda both [emphasized](#) Taiwan's expertise and potential as a technology and medical hub. Such collaboration opens avenues for both the Czech Republic and Ukraine to explore Taiwan's advancements in medical device industries, potentially leading to broader economic and technological engagement.

The presence of Ukrainian academic [Yurii Poita](#), who provided remarks on behalf of the Ukrainian community in Taiwan, added a poignant touch to the agreement. His gratitude toward Taiwan and the Czech Republic underscored the far-reaching impact of Taiwan's humanitarian efforts. The fact that Taiwan's support has resonated with the Ukrainian people, despite geographical distance, is a testament to the island's commitment to global humanitarian causes.

The MOU's focus on the eastern part of Ukraine—one of the regions most heavily affected by the war—is emblematic of Taiwan's targeted approach to healthcare assistance. The Taiwan-Czech collaboration will address key areas like general, surgical, gynecological, and rehabilitation medicine, providing comprehensive support to the war-torn region. This aspect of the MOU highlights Taiwan's ability to offer specialized medical assistance in crisis situations.

The medical products and solutions required for this project are not just a means to aid Ukraine; they are also a window for Taiwan to showcase its medical standards and capacities on the international stage. This initiative will likely enhance the understanding of Taiwan's healthcare prowess in Ukraine and other countries, potentially leading to more such collaborations in the future.

This MOU could be the beginning of a long-lasting partnership, opening doors for further cooperation between Taiwan, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine in areas like smart technology, energy, and semiconductors. The potential for more exchanges and interactions could pave the way for Taiwan's increased participation in international affairs, particularly in sectors where it holds significant expertise.



Image: The signing ceremony for the Taiwan-Czech Republic MOU related to reconstruction assistance for Ukraine's primary healthcare system, held via video link between Prague and Taipei (December 1, 2023). (Image source: [ROC Overseas Community Affairs Council](#))

UK-Taiwan MOU: Bridging Health and Diplomacy

Signed in July 2023, the [MOU](#) signed between the United Kingdom and Taiwan is a landmark achievement in international health diplomacy, particularly for Taiwan. This MOU not only demonstrates Taiwan's capability to form meaningful partnerships in health-related fields, but also symbolizes its resilience and strategic foresight in navigating complex international relations, especially with countries that maintain official relations with the PRC.

The UK-Taiwan MOU covers a wide array of health-related areas, including pandemic preparedness, digital health, health insurance, mental health, and healthy aging. This comprehensive approach highlights both countries' deep commitments to addressing both immediate and long-term health challenges. By encompassing such a broad spectrum of health concerns, the MOU set the stage for extensive cooperation, providing a robust platform for both nations to enhance the well-being and welfare of their populations.

The focus on [pandemic preparedness](#) and [digital health](#) is particularly significant in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. The world has realized the importance of being prepared for health emergencies, and digital health has emerged as a crucial tool in managing such situations. Taiwan, with its successful handling of

the COVID-19 pandemic and its advancements in digital health technology, is in a unique position to contribute significantly to this area of cooperation. This MOU could provide Taiwan with a crucial opportunity to showcase its expertise and share valuable insights with the United Kingdom, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and collaboration between the two.

The MOU established a framework for various collaborative efforts, including information-sharing, exchange programs, joint workshops, and meetings. These initiatives are vital for enhancing cooperation and knowledge exchange, providing opportunities for both nations to learn from each other's experiences and best practices. Such a structured approach to collaboration ensures that the partnership will yield tangible benefits and foster a closer relationship between the United Kingdom and Taiwan.

Diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Taiwan have long been shaped by London's staunch adherence to its ["One-China Policy,"](#) which has historically served as a barrier to UK-Taiwan ties. Despite these diplomatic constraints, the United Kingdom has nevertheless maintained robust unofficial relations with Taiwan, culminating with the signing of the MOU. This health cooperation MOU exemplifies how countries can engage in meaningful collaborations with Taiwan in areas of mutual interest, despite Britain's formal diplomatic recognition of the PRC.

The signing of this MOU is not just a bilateral achievement, but also a positive precedent for international collaboration in global health. It demonstrates that health and well-being transcend political boundaries, and that cooperative efforts in these areas can bring together nations with differing diplomatic stances. The MOU between the United Kingdom and Taiwan symbolizes a shared commitment to addressing global health challenges and leveraging each other's strengths to enhance health systems and promote public welfare.

Canada-Taiwan MOU: Expanding North American Ties

The [MOU](#) between Taiwan and Canada, signed in May 2023, was also a notable development in Taiwan's international relations, particularly in the context of its North American engagements. This MOU, with its emphasis on public health cooperation, not only solidifies Taiwan's role in global health resilience, but also exemplifies its adeptness in "soft power" diplomacy.

The MOU, signed by Taiwan Representative to Canada Harry Tseng (曾厚仁) and Canadian Trade Office in Taipei Executive Director Jim Nickel, marks the first instance of systematic cooperation between Taiwan and Canada in the field of public

health. The initiative underscored the two countries' shared commitment to enhancing resilience in response to public health incidents. By establishing this formal framework, Taiwan and Canada are poised to address a range of health challenges effectively, enhancing the well-being of both their populations.

This MOU is a testament to the growing partnership between Taiwan and Canada. It is a result of cross-departmental efforts and signifies a mutual recognition of the importance of health cooperation. The MOU is not just an agreement on paper; it is a concrete step toward bolstering the bilateral relationship, reflecting a deepening of ties that goes beyond traditional diplomacy.

The MOU highlighted Taiwan's growing confidence in its ability to contribute to global public health. Taiwan's successful management of various health crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, has proven its capability in this domain. The agreement with Canada allows Taiwan to share its experiences and expertise, further establishing its role as a vital player in international health affairs.

Speaking during the MOU's signing, Taiwan's then-Director-General of North American Affairs [Douglas Hsu](#) (徐佑典) highlighted Taiwan's "soft power and warm power," emphasizing the country's growing appeal as a partner in diverse fields, including health, economics, and trade. The MOU with Canada is part of a broader strategy that Taiwan is employing to enhance its global presence through non-traditional means of diplomacy. This approach has been successful in attracting like-minded partners who seek cooperation with Taiwan, not only in public health but also in various economic sectors.

These successes have not been limited to the national level. For instance, British Columbia (BC) has announced plans to [establish a Trade and Investment Representative \(TIR\) office in Taiwan](#). This move, driven by the recognition of Taiwan as a key market for export growth, is indicative of the increasing economic ties between Canadian provinces and Taiwan. It signals a growing awareness of Taiwan's importance in the global supply chain and its competitive edge in various sectors, including agriculture, clean energy, technology, forestry, manufacturing, information and communications, and biotechnology.

The increasing interest from US states and Canadian provinces in setting up offices in Taiwan further underscores the region's growing recognition of Taiwan's economic and trade potential. Already, [Arizona, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia](#) have established trade offices in Taiwan, a trend which is likely to continue. This growing interest from North American entities not

only boosts Taiwan's economic prospects, but also enhances its international stature.

Taiwan's Global Health Contributions

Taiwan's [advances](#) in healthcare and medical technology position it as a potential leader in global health. Its healthcare system is renowned for its efficiency and innovation, making it an ideal model for countries looking to reform and modernize their health sectors. Taiwan's expertise in digital health, telemedicine, and health technology can contribute significantly to global health initiatives, particularly in developing countries.

Moreover, Taiwan's experience in managing public health crises, evident during the 2004 SARS epidemic and the COVID-19 pandemic, provides valuable lessons for global health governance. Taiwan's proactive and transparent approach to these crises, along with its robust public health infrastructure, are models that many countries can learn from.

Taiwan's strategy of using health diplomacy to navigate its complex political landscape is a masterstroke in international relations. By focusing on a universally relevant issue like health, Taiwan can engage with a wider range of countries, including those that might otherwise be constrained by diplomatic ties with China. Health diplomacy allows Taiwan to showcase its strengths and contributions in a non-confrontational manner, facilitating international recognition and support.

The Road Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

While these MOUs represent significant progress, Taiwan faces ongoing challenges in its quest for greater international space. The geopolitical landscape, heavily influenced by China's assertive foreign policy, continues to raise barriers. However, Taiwan's continued focus on health diplomacy, combined with its technological and medical prowess, could provide a pathway to overcome these challenges.

In conclusion, Taiwan's recent MOUs in health cooperation are not just about building diplomatic relations; they are about asserting Taiwan's role in the global health arena. By making itself known and relevant as a leader in the health sector, Taiwan can increase its international presence, simultaneously contributing to global health and challenging the narrative of its international isolation. In a world increasingly interconnected by health issues, Taiwan's strategy of health diplomacy could redefine its international role, making it an indispensable player in the global health community.

The main point: Taiwan's strategic use of health diplomacy

through MOUs with the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, and Canada highlights its growing role in global health despite political challenges. These MOUs, focusing on areas like pandemic preparedness and healthcare system reconstruction, not only enhance Taiwan's international presence, but also demonstrate its ability to contribute significantly to global health issues—thereby overcoming diplomatic barriers imposed by China's influence, and asserting Taiwan's importance in the global health sector.