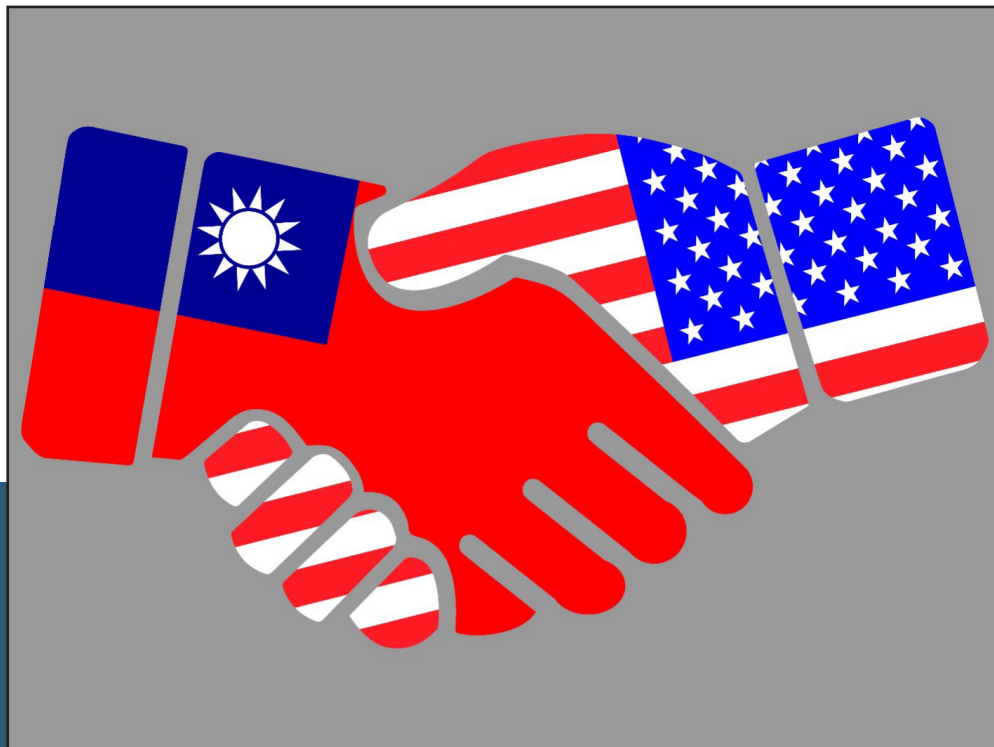


US-Taiwan Relations: Advancing Four Pillars of the Strategic Partnership



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April 2025

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GTI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit policy incubator dedicated to insightful, cutting-edge, and inclusive research on policy issues regarding Taiwan and the world. Our mission is to enhance the relationship between Taiwan and other countries, especially the United States, through policy research and programs that promote better public understanding about Taiwan and its people.

The Global Taiwan Institute is grateful to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) for its generous assistance that contributed to the research and writing for this report series.

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Introduction

The *Taiwan Relations Act* (TRA)—passed by the US Congress in 1979—has provided an enduring framework for US-Taiwan relations. This remarkable legislation mandated special American obligations and commitments to Taiwan that have helped to preserve peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait for nearly five decades. It is also the only legal underpinning of US policy toward Taiwan.

As fundamental changes necessitated adjustments in US policy during the Cold War, ongoing changes in the geopolitical landscape have required a “rethink” of the US approach to Taiwan policy and cross-Strait relations. Incremental adjustments in the approaches of both the Trump and Biden Administrations have gradually elevated the bilateral relationship into a strategic partnership based on shared values and reciprocal interests.

The United States has a deep and abiding interest in Taiwan and the TRA lays out four key areas of interest in US policy towards Taiwan. These four pillars remain the cornerstones of the strategic partnership: national security, international space, economic, and people-to-people ties.

Even as the US and Taiwan policy of maintaining the “status quo” has preserved peace in the Taiwan Strait and promoted regional prosperity, it may not be sustainable in the long term as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is unceasingly and aggressively seeking to change it through political warfare. The massive military buildup across the Strait by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), the Chinese leadership’s continued refusal to renounce the use of force against Taiwan, and the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP)

political warfare are destabilizing the Taiwan Strait and are threatening the peace and security of the Indo-Pacific area.

US policy was inherently reactive and intentionally ceded the initiative of shaping the ultimate outcome to the two other parties. It was an approach that some senior US policymakers, at the time that the policy was conceived in the 1970s, expected would create a *fait accompli*, and one that would provide Washington with the flexibility to respond to broader geopolitical challenges of the Cold War with the Soviet Union while maintaining stability in the Strait.

Indeed, US policy towards Taiwan has operated on the premise that America’s primary interest is in the process—as opposed to the outcome—of resolving differences between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Although there is wide latitude for policymakers within the United States and Taiwan to work within the existing legal and policy framework, a necessary foundation should be based on a thorough reassessment of the core

pillars and assumptions behind this longstanding approach to ensure the sustainability of peace over time.

Despite some expectations to the contrary, Taiwan thrived in the ensuing decades. The government liberalized from the top down while an active civil society fervently pushed for political reforms from the bottom up. Taiwan evolved from an authoritarian regime to a vibrant democracy. As a consequence, support for Taiwan and its democracy grew within the United States as well.

Yet, the growing power disparity between Taipei and Beijing and a protracted practice of undue deference by Washington to Beijing’s sensitivities had eroded some

The growing power disparity between Taipei and Beijing and a protracted practice of undue deference by Washington to Beijing’s sensitivities had eroded some of the original commitments made under the TRA and President Ronald Reagan’s Six Assurances.

of the original commitments made under the TRA and President Ronald Reagan's Six Assurances. These Assurances include, perhaps most importantly, maintaining the US position of not taking a position on the issue of sovereignty over Taiwan, no prior consultation with Beijing on arms sales to Taiwan, and no attempt to pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the PRC, among other assurances and commitments.

The PRC's coercive pressure campaign is aimed at gradually and unceasingly pushing for its own desired outcome: ending the sovereignty of a democratically elected government and the freedom of its 23 million people by unifying Taiwan into the PRC. All the while, the current approach may be inadvertently drawing the United States towards China's preferred objectives, at the expense of its own values and strategic interests.

As Beijing doubles down on its efforts to undermine the "status quo" and achieve the political subordination of Taiwan under its "One China Principle" through military force if necessary, the original intent of the *Taiwan Relations Act* must be the starting point for revisiting the assumptions of longstanding policy and ensuring a more robust US-Taiwan relationship.

The US-Taiwan relationship in 2025 is stronger now than it has ever been since 1979, but policy should be regularly recalibrated to ensure that it is fit for purpose for the next 5, 10, and even 25 years. This research project is intended to review advances along the four key pillars of the strategic relationship and make calibrated policy recommendations ensuring that the US-Taiwan partnership will continue to grow from strength to strength to the midpoint of the 21st century and beyond.

Taiwan Relations Act at 46 and Beyond—National Security

“It is the policy of the United States –

Section 2

(b)(2) “...that peace and stability in the [Western Pacific] are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, and are matters of international concern;”

(b)(4) “to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States;”

(b)(5) “to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character;”

(b)(6) “to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan.”

Section 3

(a) “In furtherance of the policy set forth in section 2 of this Act, the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability”;

(b) “The President and the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services based solely upon their judgment of the needs of Taiwan, in accordance with procedure established by law;”

(c) “The President is directed to inform the Congress promptly of any threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan and any danger to the interests of the United States arising therefrom. The President and the Congress shall determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger.”

- H.R. 2479, *Taiwan Relations Act of 1979*¹

¹ *Taiwan Relations Act*, Publ. L. No. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14 (1979).

By: Derek Mitchell

Introduction

Since the earliest years of the Cold War, Taiwan’s security has served as a cornerstone of US security interests in Asia. The Korean War in 1950 postponed the PRC’s early plans to seize Taiwan, and the US Seventh Fleet helped to postpone that goal indefinitely throughout the Cold War.² The 1955 US-Republic of China (on Taiwan) Mutual Defense Treaty formalized a military alliance between the two sides as Taiwan became a core component of US Cold War policy to demonstrate US commitment to contain the global spread of communism. The island became an international flashpoint through successive crises over the outlying islands of Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu, and a US presidential campaign issue in 1960.

The termination of the treaty upon normalization of US-PRC relations in 1979 ended America’s diplomatic recognition of the Republic of China (ROC) but did not negate US interest in the security of Taiwan and its people’s ability to determine their own future without coercion. Those enduring interests were captured and reaffirmed shortly after the normalization agreement was signed through congressional passage of the *Taiwan Relations Act* later that year.

Nonetheless, the PRC today poses a more comprehensive, insidious, and serious security challenge to Taiwan than ever. Despite Mao Zedong’s (毛澤東) and Deng Xiaoping’s (鄧小平) assertions that the PRC can afford to be patient about “reunification,” Xi Jinping (習近平) has expressed increasing urgency and intimated that “recovering” Taiwan is central to his goal to “rejuvenate” China and fulfill his personal legacy as PRC supreme leader. His direction for the PLA to complete its “mechanization,

² Andrew S. Erickson, “China’s Amphibious Warfare: History, Doctrine, and Forces,” *The Diplomat*, December 14, 2024, <https://thediplomat.com/2024/12/chinas-amphibious-warfare-history-doctrine-and-forces/>.

informatization and intelligitization” by 2027, for instance, appears specifically directed at preparing for a Taiwan military contingency. As a result, while most countries consider national security a fundamental but relatively understated national interest, for Taiwan, defending its status as a free, democratic and (*de facto*) independent political entity is a daily existential concern that informs all of its international relationships, including with the United States.

PRC Military Development

From the late 1970s through the 1980s, the PRC under Deng Xiaoping relegated military modernization to fourth in priority among its “Four Modernizations.” Nonetheless, Taiwan has remained the animating focus of the PLA, with the PRC military enjoying annual double-digit budget increases for more than three decades.³ China today has the world’s largest military, with more than two million active-duty personnel, and largest navy (in terms of platforms). The PLA has also developed and deployed next generation advanced aircraft (manned and unmanned), missile, space, cyber and electronic warfare capabilities, and is in the process of modernizing and expanding its nuclear forces.⁴ Furthermore, it has militarized and mobilized its coast guard and fleet of “civilian” fishing vessels (“maritime militia”)⁵ to challenge those along its maritime periphery, including Taiwan and the East and South China seas.

3 China Power, “What Does China Really Spend on its Military?,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, <https://chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/>.

4 US Department of Defense “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2024: Annual Report to Congress.” US Department of Defense, 2024.

5 Jonathan G. Panter and Shuxian Luo, “China’s Maritime Militia and Fishing Fleets—A Primer for Operational Staffs and Tactical Leaders,” *Military Review*, January-February 2021, Army University Press, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/January-February-2021/Panter-Maritime-Militia/>.

The PRC’s policy of civil-military fusion⁶ has broadened—and to an extent obscured—the full scope of China’s military development. At the same time, the PLA has reorganized its regional command structure, improved its logistics capabilities, and enhanced its real-world training for a range of potential “gray zone” and traditional attack contingencies related to Taiwan—from blockade, to electronic- or cyber-attack, to invasion of an outlying island, to full-scale invasion of the main island itself, among others. Its regular cadence of provocative military exercises around the island in recent years have kept cross-Strait tensions high. And its increasingly sophisticated information warfare has sought to keep the island off-balance by creating confusion, division and demoralization among the Taiwan people to soften its domestic resilience.

Xi is also taking actions at home to lay the groundwork for potential action against Taiwan, including heightening his strident rhetoric, enforcing patriotic education, restricting on-line expression, strengthening CCP control overall of Chinese society, and hardening the resilience of China’s economy against any potential international sanctions in response to cross-Strait aggression.

US Arms Sales and Defense Assistance

Under the TRA since 1979, the United States has provided tens of billions of dollars in military hardware and defense assistance to enable to Taiwan to deter a cross-Strait attack.⁷ Arms sales have included an array of fighter aircraft, helicopters, ships, tanks, munitions, as well as higher-end capabilities such as early warning radars, anti-air and missile batteries, electronic warfare items, etc. US defense and military personnel on and off the island have assisted Taiwan’s training

6 US Department of State, “Military-Civil Fusion and the People’s Republic of China,” (Washington, D.C.: US Department of State, May 2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/What-is-MCF-One-Pager.pdf>.

7 According to SIPRI, the United States has provided nearly US \$30 billion worth of arms sales to Taiwan between 1979 and 2024.

and readiness, something that has accelerated in recent years.

For years, US arms sales were seen as having as much symbolic as practical value—as a way to measure US political commitment to the island’s security. Taiwan often would request the latest high-end platforms, and observers would measure an administration’s political support for the island based on Washington’s decisions. Both the request and outcome as a result would not necessarily reflect a sober and objective assessment of Taiwan’s defense needs, or the realities of an increasingly complex PRC military threat, but rather political factors inside both Taiwan and the United States.

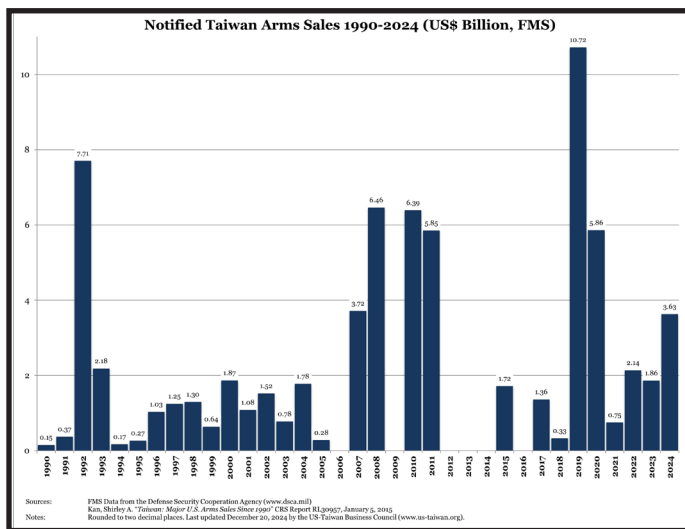


Image: Notified Taiwan Arms Sales 1990-2024 (USD billions, FMS).⁸

That dynamic has evolved over the years, but US defense hands have continued to press the traditional army-centered Taiwan military to move toward prioritizing naval and air capabilities (albeit with mixed success). They also have encouraged development of a professional non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps and all-volunteer force and an increase in Tai-

8 Image source: "Taiwan Arms Sales Notified to Congress 1990-2024," US Taiwan Business Council, December 20, 2024, <https://www.ustaiwandefense.com/taiwan-arms-sales-notified-to-congress-1990-2024/>.

wan’s annual military budget to at least three percent of GDP—a goal not yet achieved despite Taiwan consistently serving as one of the world’s top consumers of US military hardware and training.

As the cross-Strait military threat has evolved to include vastly improved PRC capabilities particularly in the air and sea, Washington has also urged Taiwan to focus less on symmetrical force-on-force defense and more on so-called asymmetrical capabilities to complicate PRC calculations: drones, mines, low-cost anti-air/ship/tank missiles (Stingers, Hsiung-Feng I-III, Javelins, et al), autonomous maritime vessels, submarines, and electronic warfare and counter-cyber assets. This approach has been dubbed a “porcupine” strategy⁹—to make Taiwan an impregnable fortress that would inflict severe pain on any PRC force that sought to attack or invade it. Championed by former Taiwan chief of general staff Lee Hsi-min (李喜明), the idea is to achieve more cost- and mission-effectiveness than seeking (futilely) to achieve sea control or air superiority around the island in the face of ever-greater PRC capabilities.

Ukraine’s remarkable resilience in the face of Russian invasion has only reinforced the value of utilizing smaller, cheaper, more mobile systems vice larger, more traditional but less practical platforms when facing a superior foe. Kyiv’s resourcefulness, whole-of-society mobilization, experience with third-country partnerships (including the United States), and general ability to resist Russia’s brutal attack on its sovereignty should offer valuable lessons to Taiwan and its partners—and give pause to Beijing.

America’s robust military presence throughout the Indo-Pacific region is intended to send a signal of unwavering US commitment to regional peace and security, including deterring PRC military action over Taiwan. Nonetheless, Washington has maintained a formal policy of “strategic ambiguity” about whether it would intervene in a Taiwan contingen-

9 Eric Lee and Lee His-min, “Taiwan’s Overall Defense Concept, Explained,” *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2020, <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/taiwans-overall-defense-concept-explained/>.



Image: Hsiung-Feng III anti-ship missile launched from a missile launchers truck.¹⁰

cy. That ambiguity has become less and less ambiguous over the years, but it remains US policy, meaning in the end that Taiwan can never assume it can rely on anyone other than itself to defend its sovereign independence against PRC aggression.

Regardless, some analysts believe that the PRC may be approaching a decisive strategic edge even accounting for US intervention. That perceived edge must be mitigated—urgently. Ultimately, any perception that US commitment or capability is lagging, or that Taiwan is not truly serious about its defense either through weakness of will or capacity, could serve as a provocation to Taiwan’s cross-Strait adversary.

"Security" Broadly Defined

In keeping with classical Chinese strategy, the PRC’s goal remains to absorb Taiwan “without fighting” or at least with a minimum of violence. To that end, Beijing has sought to sow division within Taiwan society, politically isolate the island, increase its economic insecurity, enhance the island’s dependence on China, undermine confidence in the credibility of the US security commitment, and convince the Taiwan people of the futility of resistance in the face of overwhelming

Chinese power.

The definition of Taiwan security thus must become ever more comprehensive. Several non-traditional aspects of Taiwan’s security have emerged as points of vulnerability over the past 46 years. Taiwan’s economic dependence on the PRC (outlined in the following chapter), for instance, has increased exponentially, making the island vulnerable to Chinese coercion despite the island’s urgent efforts to diversify its economic relationships.

The United States and its Asian and European allies likewise have become close economic partners of China—arguably to the point of interdependence—increasing the cost of conflict despite ambitions on both (US and PRC) sides to increasingly decouple aspects of their economic relationship. While the cost of a cross-Strait conflict will arguably fall heavier on China,¹¹ the prevailing assumption within the PRC is that Taiwan matters far more to it than to the United States, let alone US allies, and thus any cost will fall harder on them than on Beijing. This potential gap in perception raises the odds of Chinese miscalculation.

Furthermore, while Taiwan labored under martial law and a brutal, authoritarian one-party system in 1979, Taiwan’s democratic development has become another non-traditional element in the cross-Strait security dynamic in recent decades. Like Ukraine to Russia, the PRC considers Taiwan’s democracy a unique security challenge as the island’s political evolution has only pulled the island further away culturally, socially and systemically. It also serves as an implicit challenge to the CCP’s fundamental—and false—conceit that democracy is alien to Asian culture, particularly those with Chinese overtones, but instead is inclined naturally toward authoritarian rule.

The PRC’s task becomes even more important as its

¹⁰ Image source: "HF-3 ASCM fired from TEL system," Wikimedia Commons, May 27, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HF-3_ASCM_fired_from_TEL_system.jpg.

¹¹ Agatha Kratz, Charlie Vest, Logan Wright, and Matthew Mingey, “Retaliation and Resilience: China’s Economic Statecraft in a Taiwan Crisis,” Rhodium Group, April 2, 2024, <https://rhg.com/research/retaliation-and-resilience-chinas-economic-statecraft-in-a-taiwan-crisis/>.

economic growth slows and its governance model begins to lose luster over time. The CCP's legitimacy at home and leadership abroad are based on the perception that China's governance model is replicable and delivers development outcomes that rival those offered by more open democratic societies. Xi Jinping's personal legacy is also wrapped up in the credibility of his three "global initiatives"—the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative and Global Civilizational Initiative¹²—each of which is an effort to promote an alternative to the political, economic and security systems that have underwritten not only Taiwan's success and security for decades but that of others in Asia (including China).

Taiwan's very existence as an open democratic polity, therefore, has become a kind of existential challenge to the CCP. As a result, Beijing feels it must limit appreciation for Taiwan's success and undermine the quality of the island's system and society in an effort to demonstrate the "superiority" of its own model. Undermining the democratic brand globally has become a broader aspiration of the PRC in its attempt to shape the norms and standards that will prevail in the 21st century.



Image: Taoyuan City Civil Defense and Disaster Prevention Exercise in 2022.¹³

12 Liao Huan and Wang Yiwei, "Chinese Wisdom in the Three Global Initiatives," *China Today*, May 30, 2024, http://www.chinatoday.com.cn/ctenglish/2018/commentaries/202405/t20240530_800367559.html.

13 Image source: "06.23 總統出席「111年桃

At the same time, Taiwan's open, democratic and highly networked society has created new vulnerabilities that Beijing has sought to weaponize. Taiwan society's increasing digitalization heightens the country's vulnerability to cyber-attack while its polarizing political, broadcast and on-line media environment can make the island vulnerable to malign information and influence operations. China has developed cognitive warfare units—Base 311 under its Strategic Support Force, among others¹⁴—for just this purpose. While the island so far has remained resilient overall to Chinese information attacks, assisted by a vibrant civic culture of grassroots organizations dedicated to unmasking and countering them, domestic political dynamics can create opportunities for malign external manipulation and internal "fifth column" challenges to social cohesion, unity and morale.

Likewise, with the threat to Taiwan becoming more real by the day, the need for developing a civil defense strategy and other types of civic resilience—"hardening"—has become more urgent than ever. This is required not only for active defense but for deterrence to send a signal of readiness, capability and will to defend Taiwan from PRC aggression and leave no doubt that both an extended campaign and a "quick strike, quick resolution" strategy would fail.

That means Taiwan will need to ensure "sustainment," i.e., continued access to energy, food, electricity, digital connectivity, health services, etc.—over an extended period under kinetic or other hostile conditions, including a blockade. While this may seem to expand

園市全民防衛動員暨災害防救（民安8號）演習」 (52167031798) (cropped)," Wikimedia Commons, June 23, 2022, https://zh.wikipedia.org/zh-tw/File:06.23_%E7%B8%B-D%E7%B5%B1%E5%87%BA%E5%B8%AD%E3%80%8C11%E5%B9%B4%E6%A1%83%E5%9C%92%E5%B8%82%E5%85%A8%E6%B0%91%E9%98%B2%E8%A1%9B%E5%8B%95%E5%93%A1%E6%9A%A8%E7%81%B-D%E5%AE%B3%E9%98%B2%E6%95%91%EF%BC%88%E6%B0%91%E5%AE%89%E8%99%9F%EF%BC%89%E6-B-C%94%E7%BF%92%E3%80%8D_%2852167031798%29_%28cropped%29.jpg.

14 Elsa B. Kania, "The Role of PLA Base 311 in Political Warfare Against Taiwan (Part 3)," *Global Taiwan Brief*, February 15, 2017, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2017/02/the-role-of-pla-base-311-in-political-warfare-against-taiwan-part-3/>.

the definition of “defense articles and defense services” authorized under the TRA, such sustainment support from the United States and others will be as essential as any other “self-defense capability” the island develops.

Is the TRA Enough?

For the past 45+ years, the TRA (and the Six Assurances¹⁵) has stood as the foundational public statement of America’s enduring commitment to Taiwan’s security. For many years, US policy-makers and legislators avoided going much further either in statement or action for fear of incurring the wrath of Beijing and threatening the prospect of either building a “constructive strategic partnership” or avoiding a “new Cold War” with the PRC.

That is changing as Taiwan has become a vibrant democracy, the cross-Strait military balance shifts inexorably in the PRC’s favor and Xi Jinping signals—and PLA activity reflects—that recapturing Taiwan through force or coercion is becoming a more serious near-term goal.

The 117th Congress (2021-22) alone introduced more than 20 pieces of legislation related to Taiwan. The 2021 *Taiwan Defense Act*¹⁶ (originally introduced in 2020), for instance, formally affirmed

15 Congressional Research Service, “President Reagan’s Six Assurances to Taiwan,” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 28, 2024), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF11665.pdf>.

16 *Taiwan Defense Act* of 2021, S.2073, 117th Congress (2021-2022), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/2073/text>. The bill was referred to the Senate Armed Services Committee, but no further action was taken.

the importance that the United States “maintain the ability... to deny a fait accompli by the People’s Republic of China against Taiwan.”

The *Arm Taiwan Act* of 2021 (S. 3131)¹⁷ called for the establishment of a “Taiwan Security Assistance Initiative” that would deliver US \$3 billion in (asymmetric) security assistance to Taiwan annually, contingent on Taiwan spending at least 3 percent of its national GDP on defense.

With the threat to Taiwan becoming more real by the day, the need for developing a civil defense strategy and other types of civic resilience—“hardening”—has become more urgent than ever.

The *Taiwan Conflict Deterrence Act* (H.R. 544)¹⁸ required the Secretary of the Treasury to publish a report on “financial institutions and accounts” connected to senior PRC officials and their families who would be cut off from the US financial system upon a cross-Strait attack.

The most serious attempt to revise and extend the *Taiwan Relations Act* itself came in the form of the *Taiwan Policy Act*

of 2022 (S. 4428).¹⁹ If the TRA was a relatively sparse statement on an enduring US commitment to Taiwan’s defense and self-determination, the TPA unpacked the many diverse elements of US-Taiwan relations that had evolved over the years and directed US policy to ad-

17 “Senator Hawley Continues to Stand with Taiwan, Introducing New Bill to Help Nation Arm Itself,” Josh Hawley US Senator for Missouri, November 2, 2021, <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/senator-hawley-continues-stand-taiwan-introducing-new-bill-help-nation-arm-itself>. The bill was referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but no further action was taken.

18 *Taiwan Conflict Deterrence Act* of 2023, H.R.554, 118th Congress (2023-2024), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/554/text>. The bill was passed in the House in September 2024 and sent to the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee but no further action was taken and thus did not become law.

19 *Taiwan Policy Act* of 2022, S.4428, 117th Congress (2021-2022), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/4428/text>.

just itself accordingly. That meant everything from renaming Taiwan’s unofficial “embassy” in Washington the “Taiwan Representative Office,” to promoting the establishment of new entities to support educational exchange and public health cooperation, to calling for normalizing diplomatic contact between the United States and Taiwan, Taiwan’s participation in international organizations, etc.

The most extensive section of the TPA addressed the US-Taiwan “defense partnership.” The TPA mandated the Executive Branch provide an annual “Advancing the Defense of Taiwan” report to Congress akin to the PRC annual military power report mandated by Congress since fiscal year 2000. The *Act* authorized Foreign Military Financing, Excess Defense Articles and direct US training support for Taiwan, directed in specific terms a US government report to Congress on Taiwan’s civil defense and resilience needs, required a “whole-of-government” briefing to Congress on Taiwan defense, and called for a closer partnership between the Executive and Legislative branches on Taiwan arms sales, whose consideration and provision it demanded be prioritized and expedited.

Also included in the TPA were specific amendments to TRA language, including language putting Congress on record in support of developing a US Taiwan defense strategy,²⁰ and addition of a “rule of construction” that reaffirms that the United States as a matter of national interest would remain relatively unconstrained in its relations with Taiwan.²¹

20 See Section 201 (“Amendments to the Taiwan Relations Act”) (a)(b) of the *Taiwan Policy Act*, which called for new language directing the US government to “implement a strategy to deny and deter acts of coercion or aggression by the People’s Liberation Army.”

21 Section 201(c) of the *Taiwan Policy Act* reads as follows:

(c) *Rule Of Construction.*—Section 4 of the Taiwan Relations Act (22 U.S.C. 3303) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(e) *Rule Of Construction.*—Nothing in this Act, nor the President’s action in extending diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China, nor the absence of diplomatic relations between the people of Taiwan and the United States, and nor

The TPA never passed but a watered-down version—the *Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act* (TERA)—was incorporated into the 2023 *National Defense Authorization Act* and signed into law. The defense-related components included authorization of up to US \$10 billion (US \$2 billion per year) in military grants and an additional US \$2 billion in direct loans for Taiwan between 2023 and 2027; initiatives to strengthen the US-Taiwan defense partnership, including comprehensive training, contingency stockpiling, and expedited arms sales to Taiwan; and a call to counter China’s coercion and influence campaigns.

The TRA, however, remains unamended.



Image: A Taiwan Air Force C-130 transport plane, a four-engine turboprop military transport aircraft made in the United States, about to land at Taipei Songshan Airport, Taiwan.²²

the lack of formal recognition of Taiwan by the United States, and any related circumstances, may be construed to constitute a legal or practical obstacle to any otherwise lawful action of the President or of any United States Government agency that is needed to advance or protect United States interests pertaining to Taiwan, including actions intended to strengthen security cooperation between the United States and Taiwan or to otherwise deter the use of force against Taiwan by the People’s Liberation Army.”

22 Image source: Jack Hong / Shutterstock.com.

Need for Comprehensive US Assistance

Even without amending the TRA, the United States can do more to close the gap in Taiwan's security. Aside from boosting its own defense industrial base and authorizing more rapid provision of essential military capabilities for Taiwan's active front-line forces, the United States can help develop Taiwan's reserve force, boost the island's indigenous defense industrial capacity, and enhance its whole-of-society planning and resilience. The United States could increase bilateral security cooperation, including joint exercises; enhance command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) ties; and invite Taiwan to take part in broader multilateral exercises to tighten up Taiwan's defense against apparent gaps or vulnerabilities that the PRC might be tempted to exploit.

The United States should also take the lead to promote Taiwan's international profile as a matter of both the island's dignity and security. Taiwan's achievements in health, aerospace, and technology are public goods that should be shared globally, as should lessons learned in becoming one of Asia's strongest democracies after years of one-party rule. Taiwan's civil society is as vibrant as any in the region and its innovative grassroots efforts to combat information warfare from the PRC is cutting edge.

Greater international partnership to combat a range of such global challenges would help raise the profile of Taiwan and enhance the morale of its people, both of which can be important factors in the island's resilience and security. Initiatives like the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)²³ that integrate Taiwan with fellow democracies—Japan, Australia, Canada and the United States—to address common challenges is exactly what is required to help pierce Taiwan's increasing (PRC-induced) international isolation.

23 "Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)," American Institute in Taiwan, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.ait.org.tw/global-cooperation-and-training-framework-gctf/>.

At a broader political and operational level, Washington should continue to engage allies and partners on the implications of cross-Strait conflict or coercive resolution and induce Asian and European allies to communicate to China more explicitly the stakes to their respective interests of PRC aggression. Estimates of the cost to global GDP run from US \$3 to \$10 trillion dollars. Whatever the figure, the global impact would be massive beyond China, Taiwan and the United States, and the ability to ensure global nations understand that cost will be increasingly vital to upholding peace and stability across the Strait.

As the world has become aware in recent years, Taiwan's semi-conductor industry in particular has become central to the health of the emerging 21st century digital economy. More than 90 percent of the most advanced chips are manufactured in Taiwan, driving the development of artificial intelligence, quantum computing, cutting-edge smart phones and advanced military capabilities. Regardless of the establishment of more and more Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) chip manufacturing facilities around the world, including in the United States, there is no substitute in the foreseeable future for what Taiwan offers in advanced know-how and capability. Access to and preservation of these facilities, technologies and the broader innovative capacity behind them is a feature of Taiwan that policymakers in 1979 could never have imagined. Yet Taiwan's ability to acquire unobstructed the necessary components for manufacture and export of advanced semiconductor chips has become an essential component of Taiwan, US and global security.

The United States therefore should quietly discuss with its allies common responses to various Taiwan-related scenarios, from invasion to blockade/quarantine to other "gray zone" scenarios. As Ukraine tragically demonstrates, waiting until after aggression is launched to convey the depth of our respective interests will be too late. While such planning could be difficult if not awkward for many

countries that either have substantial economic ties to Beijing or have not traditionally thought about Taiwan as affecting their security (or both), such discussions should begin.

Ultimately the name of the game is deterrence. Everything the United States and its allies and partners do must be focused on dissuading Beijing from initiating a cross-Strait conflict. Once active hostilities commence, everyone will lose.

Practical, Unwavering US Commitment Required

It has become gospel that Xi Jinping has directed the PLA to develop the capability to successfully absorb Taiwan by 2027. No one can predict if or when Xi—or any future PRC leader—will give an attack order: some observers consider Beijing’s regular military incursions into Taiwan’s air and sea space in fact to be the first stage of any such attack.²⁴ Regardless, the prospect of cross-Strait conflict in the next decade is as credible as at any time since 1949.

The TRA was written during the Cold War, a different time and security environment than exists today. But many US strategic calculations as they relate to Taiwan are as relevant as ever, including the interest to maintain peace and stability in Asia and prevent the use of force to resolve disputes. It is also critical that longstanding US security commitments remain credible and the Taiwan people may deter-

24 Akhil Kadidal, “Special Report: China sets new records in air-sea operations around Taiwan,” *Janes*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.janes.com/osint-insights/defence-and-national-security-analysis/post/china-sets-new-records-in-air-sea-operations-around-taiwan>.

mine their own future without coercion.

Taiwan’s democratic and economic success since 1979 has only added to its appeal to US interests and sensibilities. Nonetheless, making the explicit case to the American public for “why Taiwan matters” to US security is critical given the prospect today of deeply antagonizing if not confronting a nuclear-armed nation in supporting the island’s defense.

The question arises, then, whether the TRA needs to be adjusted to account for the times. For instance, should the United States explicitly commit to come to Taiwan’s defense, replacing so-called “strategic ambiguity” with strategic clarity? Given the urgent need to avoid miscalculation across the Strait, it appears

to some that an explicit statement that the United States would intervene in the event of PRC aggression is required to maintain deterrence.²⁵ But amending that policy could be interpreted as violating the US-PRC normalization agreement, be viewed as provocative by Beijing and others in Asia (and perhaps Europe), and thus potentially undermine deterrence and cross-Strait stability both the United States and Taiwan seek to promote.

Regardless, the PRC well recognizes the seriousness of US and allied preparations to respond to a Taiwan contingency and is accounting for that eventuality in its own planning regardless of the state of US declaratory policy. Ultimately, the most important factor

25 See Raymond Kuo, “‘Strategic Ambiguity’ Has the U.S. and Taiwan Trapped,” *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/18/taiwan-us-china-strategic-ambiguity-military-strategy-asymmetric-defense-invasion/>; David Sacks and Richard Haass, “American Support for Taiwan Must Be Unambiguous,” *Foreign Affairs*, September 2, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/usa/2020/09/02/american-support-taiwan-must-be-unambiguous>.

Ultimately the name of the game is deterrence. Everything the United States and its allies and partners do must be focused on dissuading Beijing from initiating a cross-Strait conflict. Once active hostilities commence, everyone will lose.

in preserving Taiwan's security will be serious, sober-minded and discreet strategic action. The United States must continue to do urgent defense planning in close partnership with Taiwan, shore up domestic US understanding and support for Taiwan, and induce as many allies and partners as possible to demonstrate through both declaratory policy and tangible action their strong commitment to peaceful resolution of the cross-Strait issue and Taiwan's international dignity.

Focusing on the real vice symbolic defense needs of Taiwan must remain a bipartisan, whole-of-government, whole-of-society (public-private) endeavor in the United States, divorced from partisan politics, as should expediting the urgent provision of necessary material for Taiwan's "sufficient self-defense capability" in all its variety. Likewise, the United States should do what it can to help ensure political divisions in Taiwan do not affect the island's unity and security. The ability of Taiwan to demonstrate the capacity and will to withstand future pressure from the PRC on the island's economy, military and society will go a long way to determine whether Taiwan will remain a free, sovereign, secure and independent nation over the long run.

The United States has quietly stretched the limits of the unofficial relationship over time to do what's necessary to fulfill commitments embodied in the TRA. That has meant materiel support, technical support, training, even discreet stationing of active-duty US forces on the island to ensure coordinated planning.

One can argue, then, that the continued bipartisan commitment to Taiwan and the evolution in US defense assistance to match an increasingly complex cross-Strait challenge is evidence that the TRA retains its potency as a statement of American principle across the decades while retaining all the flexibility required by US policymakers to adapt to the moment. As such, the TRA remains one of the most effective pieces of congressional legislation in modern American history and does not need to be

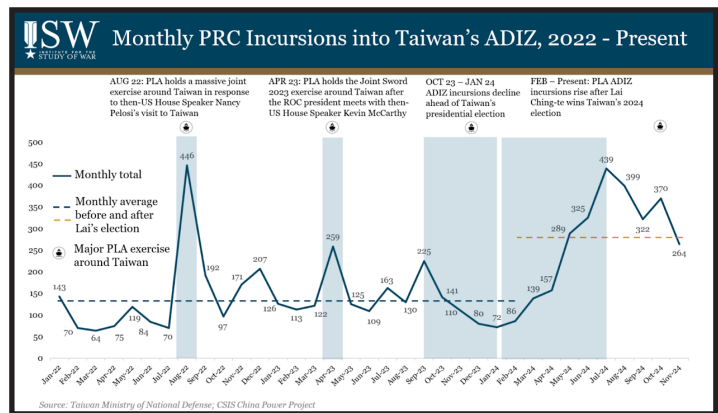


Image: Monthly PRC Incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ, 2022-2024.²⁶

amended or replaced to address Taiwan's security requirements. Nonetheless, the US government, including Congress, can never reaffirm too much its explicit commitment to the principles embodied in the TRA, including the importance of Taiwan's ability to determine its own future free from aggression or coercion. Continued formal and informal public statements are particularly important when presidential administrations or new generations of leadership ascend in the Congress.

Nor should they avoid reasonable efforts to update the details of that commitment as that can send an important signal about America's continued core interest in Taiwan security and peace and stability in the broader Indo-Pacific region. It can also help raise the morale and thus resilience of the Taiwan people knowing the depth of interest in their continued well-being and security.

Ultimately, the TRA and other prospective supplementary legislation aside, Americans must remember that the future of the island should remain in the hands of Taiwan's people. Anything about Taiwan should include Taiwan. US statements, policy and legislation should not get ahead of or run contrary to the

²⁶ Image source: "China-Taiwan Weekly Update," Institute for the Study of War and AEI's Critical Threats Project, December 5, 2024, <https://www.understandingwar.org/background-2024/china-taiwan-weekly-update-december-5-2024>.

interest or will of Taiwan's government and people. Otherwise, the United States threatens to do the PRC's work for it—to affirm that the United States doesn't care about Taiwan, its people, its dignity or its democracy inherently but as merely a tool of "great power competition." America's greatest strategic asset in the end, embodied in the TRA and its approach to other nations over decades, is its interest in the sovereign independence and well-being of others, and its commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes. Its commitment to the Taiwan people, their security and their remarkable achievements, therefore, must never be compromised—and never waver.

The US government, including Congress, can never reaffirm too much its explicit commitment to the principles embodied in the TRA, including the importance of Taiwan's ability to determine its own future free from aggression or coercion.

Taiwan's International Space

Section 4

(d) “Nothing in this Act may be construed as a basis for supporting the exclusion or expulsion of Taiwan from continued membership in any international financial institution or any other international organization”

- H.R. 2479, *Taiwan Relations Act of 1979*²⁷

By: Brent Christensen

Introduction

Taiwan is an impressive democracy, a high-tech powerhouse, and a generous donor. However, despite this, Taiwan has long struggled to play a role in the world commensurate with its achievements in the face of the PRC’s relentless efforts to restrict its access to international organizations and activities. Even in those international bodies in which Taiwan has full membership, the PRC seeks to marginalize and minimize Taiwan’s participation. Since Taiwan exited the United Nations in 1971 when the PRC was seated as the legal representative of China, Taiwan’s international standing has receded. Nevertheless, there is today a growing appreciation of Taiwan’s democratic values, its technical expertise and its vital importance to the international economy. The United States, in keeping with the TRA, recognizes the importance of Taiwan’s role in the world and is working closely with Taiwan and likeminded partners to find ways to enhance Taiwan’s international profile and its access to international organizations and initiatives.

Taiwan's Unsettled Sovereignty and UN Resolution 2758

A key factor in Taiwan’s ambiguous status in the world has been its undetermined sovereignty, which remained unsettled even after the Treaty of San Fran-

²⁷ *Taiwan Relations Act*, Publ. L. No. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14 (1979).

cisco in 1951 and the Treaty of Taipei in 1952.²⁸ Taiwan’s unsettled sovereignty created a diplomatic opening for the PRC to claim Taiwan’s UN seat, and in 1971, despite the efforts of the United States, UN member states adopted UN Resolution 2758 that awarded the China seat to the PRC and excluded Taiwan. Following its loss of the UN seat, Taiwan saw an accelerated loss of diplomatic allies, and by 1979 when the United States established formal diplomatic relations with the PRC, Taiwan had only 26 diplomatic allies, compared to 64 in 1968.²⁹

The restrictions on Taiwan’s ability to participate in the UN and its affiliated bodies have become even more pronounced since the PRC launched an aggressive campaign to pressure the UN to re-interpret Resolution 2758, to mean that Taiwan is part of China. In a letter rejecting an application by Taiwan for membership in the UN in 2007, then-UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said “in accordance with [UN Resolution 2758], the United Nations considers Taiwan for all purposes to be an integral part of the People’s Republic of China.” Following vigorous protests from the United States, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and Australia, the UN Office of Legal Affairs agreed to drop that phrase. However, the PRC has continued to press for the UN to consider Taiwan a province of the PRC, arguing that Resolution 2758, which makes no mention of Taiwan, should be interpreted to support the PRC’s claim under its “One-China Principle” that Taiwan is part of China.³⁰

²⁸ John Tkacik, “Taiwan’s ‘Unsettled’ International Status: Preserving U.S. Options in the Pacific,” The Heritage Foundation, June 19, 2008, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/taiwans-unsettled-international-status-preserving-us-options-the-pacific>

²⁹ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China*, (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 2009) 49-51.

³⁰ Bonnie S. Glaser and Jessica Drun, “The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 and Limits on Taiwan’s Access to the United Nations,” The German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 24, 2022, <https://www.gmfus.org/>

To help counter the PRC narrative about Resolution 2758, Taiwan supporters in Congress have put forward bills in recent years such as the *Taiwan International Solidarity Act* introduced in 2023 that reaffirm the US position that Resolution 2758 does not address Taiwan's status and does not support the PRC's claim that the resolution upholds its "One-China Principle."³¹ Other governments such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, the Netherlands and the European Parliament have all passed similar motions making it clear that they also do not support the PRC's claim.³²



Image: Overseas Taiwanese gathered in DC to voice support for Taiwan's participation in WHA in 2022.³³

Taiwan in WHO, ICAO and Other UN Bodies

Due to the PRC's growing influence in the UN system, Taiwan has been gradually excluded from the

news/distortion-un-resolution-2758-and-limits-taiwans-access-united-nations.

31 Taiwan International Solidarity Act, H.R.2646, 117th Congress (2021-2023), <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/117/hr2646>.

32 "Votes and Proceedings Thursday 28 November 2024," House of Commons Business Papers, UK Parliament, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://commonsbusiness.parliament.uk/Document/90466/Html?subType=Standard>

33 Image source: "2022-05-07 Overseas Taiwanese gathered in DC to voice support for Taiwan's participation in the WorldHealth Assembly(WHA)," Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States, May 7, 2022, https://www.roc-taiwan.org/us_en/album/150/gallery.html.

activities of the UN or even from being an observer at annual meetings of UN technical agencies like the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Not only does this deprive the world community of Taiwan's significant technical expertise, but it also means that there are substantial gaps in coverage of international public health, civil aviation and criminal activity. But with the advent of the mainland-friendly administration of Kuomintang (KMT) President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) (2008-16), the PRC acquiesced to Taiwan being an observer at the WHO's Annual Health Assembly (WHA) in 2009-16, and also at the Triennial Assembly of the ICAO in 2013. Moreover, during the eight years of the Ma Ying-jeou Administration, Taiwan and the PRC established a "diplomatic truce" whereby the PRC pledged to cease poaching Taiwan's diplomatic allies. However, with the election of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) in 2016, the PRC again moved to block Taiwan's participation as an observer at WHO and ICAO. Even Taiwan's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have difficulty attending UN agency meetings, especially since UN bodies now routinely deny Taiwan citizens access to UN venues when presenting Taiwan identity documents. And with the end of the diplomatic truce between the two sides, the PRC renewed its efforts to poach Taiwan's diplomatic allies. From 2016 to 2024, Taiwan lost ten diplomatic partners, leaving only 12 remaining.³⁴

Taiwan in Other International Organizations

Despite Taiwan's ouster from the UN and most of its associated organizations, it is still an official member of many international organizations, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization (APEC), as well as a number of

34 Congressional Research Service, "Taiwan's Position in the World," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, April 29, 2024), crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF12646.



Image: The flag that Taiwan uses when it competes in the Olympics under the name "Chinese Taipei."³⁵

specialized organizations that deal with fisheries, agriculture and other technical issues. And as of 1984, Taiwan has been able to participate in the Olympics. But even in those international organizations and activities where it is a full member, Taiwan usually has to accept alternative names (e.g., “Chinese Taipei”) rather than the Republic of China or Taiwan, as well as alternative arrangements for participation. For example, in the Olympics, Taiwan is not allowed to display its flag but instead uses a special flag designed just for the Olympics.³⁶ At the annual APEC Leaders Summit, Taiwan is not allowed to send its president and instead sends an eminent public or business figure, like TSMC founder Morris Chang (張忠謀).³⁷

US Support

The United States has long been a strong supporter of Taiwan’s participation in international organizations and their activities. As the TRA states, “Nothing in this

35 Image source: “Chinese Taipei at the Olympics,” Wikipedia, March 6, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Taipei_at_the_Olympics.

36 Taejun Kang, “EXPLAINED: Why is Taiwan called ‘Chinese Taipei’ at sports events?,” *Radio Free Asia*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/explainer-taiwan-chinese-taipei-09052024064157.html>.

37 I-Wei Jennifer Chang, “APEC’s Continued Salience for Taiwanese Diplomacy,” *Global Taiwan Brief*, December 1, 2021, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/12/apecs-continued-salience-for-taiwanese-diplomacy/>.



Image: Former US Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s statement calling for the World Health Organization to invite Taiwan to participate as an observer at the 2023 World Health Assembly meeting.³⁸

act may be construed as a basis for supporting the exclusion or expulsion of Taiwan from continued membership in any international financial institution or any other international organization.”³⁹ Following the Clinton Administration’s Taiwan Policy Review in 1994, the United States more explicitly articulated a policy of support for Taiwan’s full membership in organizations where statehood is not a prerequisite and meaningful participation in those that do.⁴⁰

38 Image source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC (Taiwan), “Read US Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s statement calling for the World Health Organization to invite Taiwan to participate as an observer at this year’s World Health Assembly meeting so it may lend its expertise to the discussions!,” *Facebook*, May 10, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=635360625303376&set=a.349044600601648>

39 “Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8, 22 U.S.C. 3301 ET SEQ.),” American Institute in Taiwan, published March 30, 2022, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.ait.org.tw/taiwan-relations-act-public-law-96-8-22-u-s-c-3301-et-seq/>.

40 “Taiwan Policy Review—Winston Lord, Assistant

This was further affirmed by the *Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act* of 2019.⁴¹ In 2021, then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken encouraged UN member states to join the United States “in supporting Taiwan’s robust, meaningful participation throughout the UN system and in the international community.” To help coordinate the respective efforts of the United States, Taiwan and likeminded supporters, the United States and Taiwan have established a US-Taiwan Working Group on International Organizations.⁴²

Since the end of the Ma Administration, the United States, has joined with other likeminded partners to pressure the WHO to include Taiwan in the WHO’s annual WHA as an observer and also allow participation in more WHO technical meetings. Taiwan’s extraordinary success in detecting and managing the COVID pandemic greatly strengthened its argument for inclusion in WHO activities. While the WHO has yet to allow Taiwan to again attend the WHA, a growing number of likeminded WHO member states have joined the campaign.⁴³

Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs on September 27, 1994,” American Institute in Taiwan, archived 2017, <https://web-archive-2017.ait.org.tw/en/19940927-taiwan-policy-review-by-winston-lord.html>.

41 *Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act*, Publ. L. No. 116-135, Stat. 1678 (2019-2020).

42 “U.S.-Taiwan Working Group Meeting on International Organizations (IO Talks),” Press Releases, Office of the Spokesperson, US Department of State, archived October 23, 2021, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-taiwan-working-group-meeting-on-international-organizations-4/>.

43 John Pomfret, “Taiwan must participate in the

US efforts in other UN organizations like ICAO are ongoing. For example, in 2022, then-US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, who led the US delegation to the ICAO Triennial Assembly, included in his statement an unprecedented call for ICAO to allow Taiwan “to participate meaningfully in ICAO’s work.” This was followed by a visit to ICAO by then-Secretary of State Blinken during which he reiterated the points made by Secretary Buttigieg.⁴⁴ To demonstrate US support for Taiwan’s participation in ICAO, US officials also participated in a GCTF workshop in Montreal that highlighted Taiwan’s importance to international civil aviation. However, the new Trump Administration’s announcement that the United States is withdrawing from the WHO will likely make it more challenging for the United States to play a leading role in advocating for Taiwan’s inclusion in the WHA.⁴⁵

Taiwan’s slogan “Taiwan Can Help” conveys the message that it is ready and willing to support international assistance efforts, and it has indeed been very generous in its humanitarian assistance and disaster relief work.

Taiwan's Generosity

Taiwan’s slogan “Taiwan Can Help” conveys the message that it is ready and willing to support international assistance efforts, and it has indeed been very generous in its humanitarian assistance and disaster relief work. In 2011, Taiwan was one of the largest donors of aid to the Fukushima disaster in Japan. In 2013, Taiwan was the first on the scene in the Philippines following the devas-

WHO. Global health is too important to play politics.” *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/04/14/taiwan-must-join-who-global-health-is-too-important-play-politics/>.

44 Allison Lampert and David Shepardson, “Buttigieg backs Taiwan participation in UN civil aviation body,” *Reuters*, September 27, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/buttigieg-backs-taiwan-participation-un-civil-aviation-body-2022-09-27/>.

45 “Withdrawing the United States From the World Health Organization,” The White House, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organization/>.

tating Typhoon Haiyan with planes and ships full of humanitarian aid. Taiwan also provided over US \$126 million in aid to Ukraine following Russia's invasion,⁴⁶ and following the 2023 earthquake in Turkey, Taiwan provided US \$2 million for disaster relief and also sent search and rescue teams.⁴⁷ Taiwan also routinely provides disaster relief funding to US states and cities following hurricanes or other natural disasters, the most recent example being a donation of US \$1 million following the devastating wildfires in Los Angeles, with more assistance coming from Taiwan NGOs.⁴⁸

Unfortunately, due to PRC pressure, Taiwan's assistance is not always accepted by countries in need. For instance, following a 7.8 earthquake in April 2015 in Nepal, the Nepalese government turned down Taiwan's offer to send a search and rescue team, citing the lack of diplomatic ties, its "One-China Policy" and the physical distance between Taiwan and Nepal. Similarly, Taiwan's offer of help to Indonesia following an earthquake and tsunami in Central Sulawesi in 2018 was declined reportedly because of PRC pressure.⁴⁹ Despite Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO, Taiwan still makes efforts to support WHO international relief activities. For example, in 2014 when the WHO put out a call for donations to fight the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, Taiwan offered a US \$1 million donation, but it was refused. However, the United States

46 Kristina Kironka and Vladimira Lickova, "Taiwan's aid diplomacy to Ukraine: catching two birds with one stone," Central European Institute of Asian Studies Insights, November 1, 2024, <https://ceias.eu/taiwans-aid-diplomacy-to-ukraine-catching-two-birds-with-one-stone/>.

47 "Taiwan's international search and rescue team departs on charter flight to conduct rescue mission in earthquake-affected areas of Turkey," News and Events, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of China (Taiwan), archived February 7, 2023, https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&sms=273&s=99590.

48 Elizabeth Hsu and Lin Hung-han, "Taiwan donates US\$1m to Loss Angeles for wildfire relief," *Central News Agency*, February 10, 2025, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202502100006>.

49 Alain Guilloux, "Taiwan's humanitarian aid/disaster relief: Wither or prosper?," Brookings Institution, August 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/taiwans-humanitarian-aiddisaster-relief-wither-or-prosper/>.



Image: Donations from TaiwanICDF's Taiwan Technical Mission to unemployed laborers in Palau during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁰

was able to find a workaround by having the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Foundation accept the donation.⁵¹

The COVID-19 pandemic gave Taiwan new opportunities to showcase its extraordinary ability to manage a public health crisis and also demonstrate its generosity to the international community, especially as compared to the PRC's abrupt suspension of exports of much-needed health equipment and supplies and its coercive use of vaccines. Instead, Taiwan quickly ramped up production and export of health equipment and supplies, and donated tens of millions of facemasks, which generated immense respect and good will for Taiwan throughout the world.⁵²

Taiwan's Economic Importance

50 Image source: TaiwanICDF, *Flickr*, April 21, 2022, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/taiwanicdf/52019819487/in/photo-stream/>.

51 "Taiwan Provides \$1 Million Donation to CDC Foundation for Ebola Response Effort," Latest News, CDC Foundation, archived December 4, 2014, <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/pr/2014/taiwan-provides-1-million-donation-cdc-foundation-ebola-response-effort>.

52 How Taiwan became a linchpin in the fight against Covid-19," *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.com/storyworks/future/taiwan-the-worlds-tech-partner/how-taiwan-became-a-linchpin-in-the-fight-against-covid-19>.

The international shortage of semiconductors during the pandemic has led to a new appreciation for Taiwan's essential role in the world economy. As former Taiwan Minister for Economic Affairs Wang Mei-hua (王美花) observed, "The majority of the world's most advanced semiconductor manufacturing takes place in Taiwan. Any disruption to this in Taiwan could severely impact the high-tech sector and economies around the world. This highlights Taiwan's interconnectedness with the global economy and demonstrates why Taiwan is so important."⁵³

President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) highlighted Taiwan's importance to the world early in his administration, pointing out that "Taiwan occupies a strategic position on one of the world's busiest shipping lanes; we play a crucial role on the front-line of the democratic world; our advanced supply chains hold the key to the next generation of technological development. The Taiwan of today is a Taiwan of the world. Anything that happens to Taiwan could send ripples through the entire globe. Therefore, Taiwan's issues are international issues, and international issues are Taiwan's issues."⁵⁴

Taiwan is making use of its formidable economic and technology clout to promote its indispensability to the world economy. As a recent CSIS report stressed, "While values are important, interests are the primary driver of international support for Taiwan in many parts of the world." Thus, the investments or planned investments of computer chip giant TSMC and other Taiwan high-tech firms in the United States, Japan and Germany are serving to strengthen economic

53 "Economic Minister Wang accentuates Taiwan's semiconductor prowess at CSIS event," Taiwan Today, October 12, 2022, <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=6&post=226440>.

54 "President Lai holds press conference to mark first month in office," News release, Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed March 21, 2025, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6768>.

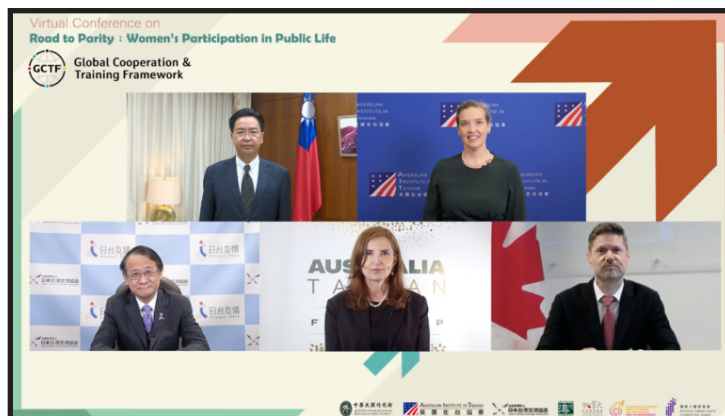


Image: The GCTF Virtual Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.⁵⁵

and political linkages with these key partners. Taiwan is also in discussions with other partners about high-tech deals in Canada, Europe and Asia.⁵⁶

GCTF and Other Platforms

One of the most successful US-Taiwan efforts to expand Taiwan's influence in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond has been the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF). Established in 2015, the GCTF has provided a platform for Taiwan to showcase its expertise across a range of areas where Taiwan has demonstrated strengths, such as public health, e-commerce, humanitarian relief and disaster assistance, media literacy, women's empowerment and sustainable aviation. Other countries have since joined the partnership, with Japan joining in 2019, Australia in 2021 and Canada in 2024. The United Kingdom, Israel, Sweden and the Netherlands have also participated in some of the GCTF's 70-plus workshops. While most GCTF workshops have been held in Taiwan, GCTF workshops have also been held in Palau, Lithuania, Guatemala, Canada and Switzerland. The extraordinary success of the GCTF has given Taiwan technical

55 Image source: "The GCTF Virtual Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," American Institute in Taiwan, May 6, 2022, <https://www.ait.org.tw/virtual-conference-on-road-to-parity-womens-participation-in-public-life/>

56 Jude Blanchette, Lily McElwee, and Ryan Hass, "Building International Support for Taiwan," Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 13, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/building-international-support-taiwan>.

experts opportunities to interact with their counterparts in the Indo-Pacific region and elsewhere, despite Taiwan's inability to participate in activities organized in the region by the UN and other international organizations.⁵⁷

Other platforms to promote Taiwan's international space include the annual US-Taiwan Consultations on Democratic Governance in the Indo-Pacific, which also allows Taiwan to engage with regional counterparts on issues such as disinformation, election transparency and democratic resilience.⁵⁸ With the US launch of the Summits for Democracy in 2021, Taiwan has been invited to participate in each of the three annual summits. But even when the United States introduces a new international initiative such as the annual "Our Oceans Conference," other country hosts that are more under PRC influence may still exclude Taiwan. Taiwan was invited to the Our Oceans Conferences from 2014 to 2022, but was excluded from the conferences hosted by Panama in 2023 and Greece in 2024.⁵⁹

Preserving Diplomatic Allies

To counter the PRC's efforts to pressure and coerce Taiwan's diplomatic allies to switch recognition to the PRC, the United States has taken actions to encourage these countries to maintain formal relations with Taiwan. For example, in 2019, the United States sent a team to the Caribbean region led by the

head of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC)—now known as the International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC)—that included a visit to Taiwan ally St. Lucia to engage with local industry stakeholders to discuss investment areas like infrastructure, tourism, and energy.⁶⁰ An initiative on development cooperation between the IDFC and Taiwan was formalized with the signing of an memorandum of understanding (MOU) in early 2024.⁶¹ During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the PRC sought to use its vaccines to coerce Taiwan diplomatic allies to switch sides, the United States donated vaccines to Taiwan's allies to help fend off this pressure. The United States also coordinated with India to speed deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines to Taiwan diplomatic allies such as Paraguay, where India's shipment of vaccines arrived at a critical time to allow Paraguay to resist PRC pressure to switch recognition.⁶² In early 2024, Congress introduced the *Taiwan Allies Fund Act* aimed at assisting countries that maintain official or unofficial relations with Taiwan in resisting PRC coercion.⁶³

57 "MOFA, AIT, Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, Australian Office, and Canadian Trade Office in Taipei Host GCTF Workshop on 'Setting an Ambitious Path towards a Net-Zero Future' in Taipei," News, Global Cooperation & Training Framework, accessed March 21, 2024, https://www.gctf.tw/en/news_detail102_0.htm.

58 "2024 U.S.-Taiwan Consultations on Democratic Governance in the Indo-Pacific Region," American Institute in Taiwan, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.ait.org.tw/2024-us-taiwan-consultations-on-democratic-governance-in-the-indo-pacific-region/>.

59 "Our Ocean Conference," Remarks & Releases, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, US Department of State, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/our-ocean-conference/>.

60 "OPIC Acting President and CEO Bohigian Leads Delegation to the Dominican Republic," Speeches & Testimony, Newsroom, US International Development Finance Corporation, archived May 22, 2019, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.dfc.gov/media/opic-press-releases/opic-acting-president-and-ceo-bohigian-leads-delegation-dominican>.

61 "DFC-Taiwan Collaboration on Advancing Private Sector Investment Opportunities," Media Release, US International Development Finance Corporation, archived February 22, 2024, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.dfc.gov/media/press-releases/dfc-taiwan-collaboration-advancing-private-sector-investment-opportunities>.

62 Harsh V. Pant, "India's Vaccine Diplomacy Reaches Taiwan," *Foreign Policy*, April 20, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/20/india-vaccine-diplomacy-china-taiwan/>.

63 "Bipartisan Coalition of Members Introduce Legislation to Support Taiwan's International Space, Counter CCP Economic Coercion," Press Release, Select Committee on the CCP—Democrats, released May 10, 2024, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://democrats-selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/media/press-releases/bipartisan-coalition-members-introduce-legislation-support-taiwans>.

INGOs and Press Organizations Which Have Offices in Taiwan

International NGOs	Press Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amnesty International • Reporters Without Borders • Freedom House • International Republican Institute (IRI) • National Democratic Institute (NDI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deutsche Welle • Financial Times • BBC • The Wall Street Journal • Reuters • Agence France-Presse (AFP) • Al Jazeera

Image source: Created by GTI.

Taiwan a Regional Hub for International NGOs and Journalists

Because of Taiwan’s remarkable success as a democracy—ranked number eight in the World Democracy Index and number one in Asia—Taiwan, with US support, has actively encouraged international NGOs to locate in Taiwan. Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has facilitated this effort by simplifying registration processes, assigning support staff for NGO applications, and even offering subsidies to encourage more NGOs to set up offices.⁶⁴ Further bolstering Taiwan’s reputation as a free and open media environment—ranked number one in Asia by Reporters Without Borders on its Press Freedom Index—Taiwan has also welcomed many international news agencies, including some expelled from the PRC, to set up shop in Taiwan. These include *Reuters*, the *Financial Times*, *BBC*, the *New York Times*, *Bloomberg* and *Al Jazeera*. This has not only enhanced Taiwan’s reputation as a haven for press freedom but also had the added benefit of garnering more international press coverage for Taiwan.⁶⁵

64 J. Michael Cole, “Reinvigorating Taiwan’s Role as Asia’s NGO Hub,” *Global Taiwan Brief*, March 11, 2020, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2020/03/reinvigorating-taiwans-role-as-asias-ngo-hub/>.

65 Erin Hale, “Taiwan emerges as a hub for foreign media in Asia,” *International Journalists’ Network*, November 6, 2018, <https://ijnnet.org/en/story/taiwan-emerges-hub-foreign-media-asia>.

Taiwan on the Agenda

The United States has sought to highlight Taiwan’s global importance by including Taiwan as a topic of discussion in high-level multilateral meetings. Beginning with the Biden Administration, the United States has put Taiwan on the agenda of G7, and bilateral and trilateral meetings with Japan, Australia, Korea and others, and issued joint statements after these meetings to underscore concerns about Taiwan.⁶⁶ In the April 2024 meeting of the Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) compact, then-Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell stated that the AUKUS cooperation pact would help enhance regional peace and stability, including in the Taiwan Strait.⁶⁷ In addition to efforts to highlight Taiwan’s importance in international gatherings, US security partners Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia and others have also sent warships through the Taiwan Strait to show resolve and support for peace and stability across the Strait.⁶⁸

66 Patsy Widakuswara, “Biden Ends G7 Summit With Warning to China on Taiwan,” *Voice of America*, May 21, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/biden-ends-g7-summit-with-a-warning-to-china-on-taiwan/7102925.html>.

67 David Brunnstrom and Michael Martina, “Senior US diplomat links AUKUS submarine pact to Taiwan,” *Reuters*, April 3, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/senior-us-diplomat-links-aukus-submarine-pact-taiwan-2024-04-03/>.

68 Micah McCartney, “Three US Allies Sail Warships Near China,” *Newsweek*, September 26, 2024, <https://www.newsweek.com/japan-warship-taiwan-strait-china-news-1959582>.



Image: World leaders at the G7 Summit in 2024.⁶⁹

Stronger Unofficial Relations

Although its official diplomatic relationships have dwindled, Taiwan, with US encouragement, has made great strides in improving its unofficial relationships, particularly with democratic states in Europe and Asia. In Europe, Taiwan's outreach to Central and Eastern Europe has been especially noteworthy. The Czech Republic, Lithuania and Poland have actively advocated

for Taiwan's international participation through visits by officials, parliamentary delegations, and public support. A particularly impressive example was Lithuania allowing Taiwan to open a representative office with "Taiwan" in its name, despite sharp criticism and economic pressure from China.⁷⁰ In Asia, Taiwan has also seen significant im-

69 Image source: European Union, Wikimedia Commons, June 13, 2024, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G7_Summit_2024_-_Family_photo_-_02.jpg.

70 Philippe Le Corre, "The 'Rebirth' of Europe-Taiwan Relations: Explaining Europe's New Balance Between Beijing and Taipei," Asia Society Policy Institute, January 10, 2024,

provement in its ties with India and Southeast Asia.⁷¹

Taiwan's discussions with European friends on strategic investments in advanced manufacturing, semiconductors and technology in Europe have had the secondary benefit of bolstering cooperation on shared democratic values. This has resulted in greater recognition of Taiwan in international forums like the Copenhagen Democracy Summits where then-President Tsai Ing-wen appeared via pre-recorded speeches in 2020, 2021, and 2023. To further strengthen Taiwan's relationships in Europe, former President Tsai also made an unprecedented visit to Europe in October 2024 where she visited the Czech Republic, France and Belgium.⁷²

Conclusion

While Taiwan may have an ambiguous status in the world today, in view of its democratic values, its technical expertise and critical role in high-tech supply chains, and its generosity as a donor, it is obvious that Taiwan has much to contribute to the international community. There is considerable scope to expand Taiwan's international connections and space, but in the face of unrelenting PRC resistance, the United States and other likeminded countries will need to take stronger, more creative and more coordinated measures to achieve success.

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<https://asiasociety.org/policy-institute/rebirth-europe-taiwan-relations-explaining-europes-new-balance-between-beijing-and-taipei>.

71 William Yang, "Former Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen heads to Europe this week," *Voice of America*, October 7, 2024, <https://www.voanews.com/a/former-taiwan-president-tsai-ing-wen-heads-to-europe-this-week/7813427.html>.

72 Robert Wang, "Advancing the US-Taiwan Partnership to Bolster Democracies in Asia," *Global Taiwan Brief*, December 13, 2023, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/12/advancing-the-us-taiwan-partnership-to-bolster-democracies-in-asia/>.

The US-Taiwan Economic Relationship

"It is the policy of the United States—

Section 2

(b)(1) "to preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan..."

Section 4

(b)(1) "Whenever the laws of the United States refer or relate to foreign countries, nations, states, governments, or similar entities, such terms shall include and such laws shall apply with such respect to Taiwan."

- H.R. 2479, Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 ⁷³

By: Brent Christensen

Taiwan is one of the United States' most important economic partners. Ranking seventh among US trading partners, Taiwan is on par with France or India as a destination for US goods and services. Taiwan is the tenth largest market for US merchandise exports, sixth largest market for US agricultural exports, and, on a per-capita basis, the largest consumer of US food exports. Taiwan is also one of the world's top producers of semiconductors and information and communication technology (ICT), making it a critical link in global high-tech supply chains. Indeed, Taiwan is now the source of over 60 percent of the world's semiconductors and over 90 percent of the most advanced semiconductors. Taiwan is also an important investor in the United States, with semiconductor giant TSMC's new multibillion-dollar production facility in Arizona representing a new phase of Taiwan investment in the United States. In view of Taiwan's vital significance for the US economy, new economic agreements

⁷³ Taiwan Relations Act, Publ. L. No. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14 (1979).

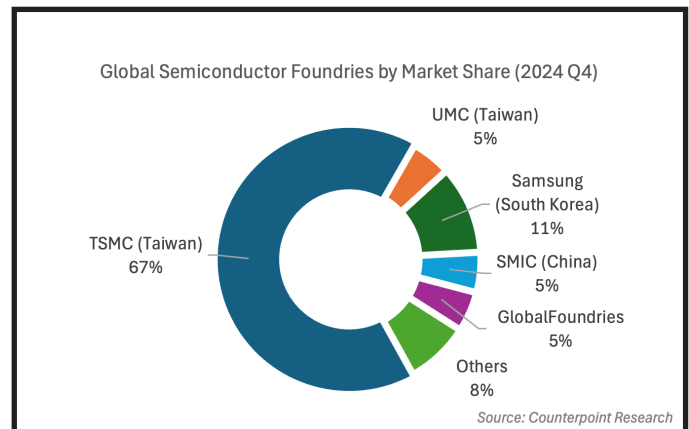


Image: Global semiconductor foundries by market share (2024 Q4).⁷⁴

will be central to expanding and deepening the bilateral economic relationship.

Key Link in International Supply Chains

Although Taiwan has dominated the global semiconductor industry for years, the United States and other countries around the world only woke up to Taiwan's indispensable role in international high-tech supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic when certain industries like the auto manufacturing sector were hit with severe computer chip shortages. Consequently, with the PRC threat to Taiwan growing by the day, the United States has focused new attention on the need to safeguard these critical high-tech supply chains, with measures that include the *CHIPS and Science Act*. According to a 2023 study by Project 2049 and the US-Taiwan Business Council, the loss of access to Taiwan's semiconductor industry would have a negative impact on the US economy greater than either the global financial crisis of 2008 or the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020. A significant disruption to Taiwan's semiconductor industry could affect as much as US \$1.6 trillion, or nearly 8 percent, of America's annual GDP, which would seriously impact industries like personal electronics, automotives and telecommunications. And even this estimate may be low, in view of how much of the US economy now relies on semiconductors and

⁷⁴ Image source: Created by GTI using data from Counterpoint Research, <https://www.counterpointresearch.com/insights/global-semiconductor-foundry-market-share/>

other Taiwan-produced technology for everything from agriculture to health care.⁷⁵

TRA Support

As outlined in the *Taiwan Relations Act*, it is US policy to: “Promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan.”

In addition, the TRA states: “Whenever the laws of the United States refer or relate to foreign countries, nations, states, governments, or similar entities, such terms shall include and such laws shall apply with respect to Taiwan...” This means that not only does the TRA encourage the United States to have strong economic relations with Taiwan, it also allows for the United States to have essentially the same kind of economic and commercial arrangements with Taiwan that it has with other economic partners.⁷⁶

However, despite the TRA’s legal provisions, bilateral economic agreements with Taiwan have been slow in coming, partly because the United States’ relationship with Taiwan is unofficial, but also because the economic relationship with Taiwan has often been regarded as less important than the bigger economic relationship with the PRC. But with increasing tensions and restrictions affecting US trade and investment with the PRC, priorities are changing. Many US companies are rethinking their commercial interests in the PRC, and are looking to shift trade and investment

elsewhere, including to Taiwan. Moreover, the PRC’s sudden cutoff of exports of critically-needed Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) and other critically-needed medical products during the COVID-19 pandemic also demonstrated to the United States and other countries that the PRC was not the reliable trading partner they thought it was. In sharp contrast, Taiwan, reacting to the urgent need for these products, stepped up its production of PPE, APIs and other such products for the United States and other partners. It also donated millions of facemasks to the international community, with over ten million facemasks going to the United States alone.⁷⁷

Many US companies are rethinking their commercial interests in the PRC and are looking to shift trade and investment elsewhere, including to Taiwan.

TIFA

One early US-Taiwan agreement to help manage the economic relationship was the *US-Taiwan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement* (TIFA) signed in 1994, with a first round of TIFA talks in 1995. Since then, TIFA talks have been held sporadically, and from 2003, when Taiwan imposed restrictions on US

beef due to the outbreak of mad cow disease in the United States, agricultural issues such as restrictions on US beef and pork became more dominant in the trade relationship.⁷⁸ In 2012, the Ma Ying-jeou Administration sought to lift restrictions on US beef and pork, but because of domestic resistance only succeeded in opening the market for US beef, leaving restrictions on pork as a festering issue in trade

75 Project 2049 Institute and US Taiwan Business Council, “U.S., Taiwan, and Semiconductors: A Critical Supply Chain Partnership,” July 21, 2023, <https://www.us-taiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023.06.21-Final-Semiconductor-Report.pdf>.

76 “Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8, 22 U.S.C. 3301 ET SEQ.),” American Institute in Taiwan, published March 30, 2022, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.ait.org.tw/taiwan-relations-act-public-law-96-8-22-u-s-c-3301-et-seq/>.

77 Chien-Jen Chen, “Taiwan-US Cooperation in Public Health and Pandemic Containment,” East-West Center, July 19, 2022, <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/taiwan-us-cooperation-in-public-health-and-pandemic-containment>.

78 “Trade & Investment Framework Agreements (TIFA),” American Institute in Taiwan, accessed March 21, 2025, <https://www.ait.org.tw/trade-investment-framework-agreements/>.

relations.⁷⁹

The US-Taiwan 21st Century Trade Initiative

Taiwan has long sought to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States. Recognizing that fully opening the market to US meat products would be a necessary good faith signal to US trade negotiators, in August 2020 President Tsai Ing-wen declared that Taiwan would welcome imports of all US pork products, along with certain US beef products not previously permitted entry. Although the opposition KMT party sought to overturn this decision with a controversial referendum, the referendum was ultimately defeated and Tsai's policy changes prevailed.⁸⁰

While the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR) did not reward Taiwan's lifting restrictions on US pork with an offer to open talks on an FTA, it did launch the US-Taiwan 21st Century Trade Initiative in 2022, which had certain elements of an FTA, albeit not market access.⁸¹ Nevertheless, this new framework aimed at deepening economic and trade ties between the United States and Taiwan across a range of trade issues, including innovation, transparency and fair competition. Since the signing of the 21st Century Trade Initiative, the United States and Taiwan have already met several times, and in June 2023 signed a first agreement under this initiative on customs, regulatory practices,

79 Don Shapiro, "Getting Beyond Beef in U.S.-Taiwan Relations," Brookings Institution, February 10, 2012, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/getting-beyond-beef-in-u-s-taiwan-relations/>.

80 Kathrin Hille, "Taiwan voters back government US pork referendum," *Financial Times*, December 19, 2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/cee59ee9-f549-47fb-baf3-d2c3942f99b0>.

81 "Statement from USTR Spokesperson Sam Michel on U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade Signing Ceremony," Policy Offices, Office of the United States Trade Representative, last modified June 1, 2023, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2023/june/statement-ustr-spokesperson-sam-michel-us-taiwan-initiative-21st-century-trade-signing-ceremony>.



Image: Photo from former President Tsai Ing-wen's account on X commemorating the signing of the first agreement under the Taiwan-US Initiative on 21st Century Trade.⁸²

anti-corruption measures and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. A second phase is focused on agriculture, labor, and environmental issues.⁸³ Separately, the US Department of State and Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs in late 2020 launched the US-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue (EPPD) to focus on non-trade economic issues such economic coercion, supply chain resilience and investment and tax-related barriers. In another significant breakthrough for the economic relationship, the US Treasury announced in October 2024 that the United States and Taiwan will be negotiating a comprehensive bilateral double taxation agreement.⁸⁴

Taiwan as Technology Leader

Even though Taiwan is best known for its semiconductor

82 Image source: iingwen, X, June 2, 2023, <https://x.com/iingwen/status/1664580640132706304>.

83 Riley Walters, "Towards a Second Agreement of the US-Taiwan 21st Century Trade Initiative," *Global Taiwan Brief*, May 15, 2024, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2024/05/towards-a-second-agreement-of-the-us-taiwan-21st-century-trade-initiative/>.

84 "United States and Taiwan to Begin Negotiating a Comprehensive Tax Agreement to Address Double Taxation," Press Releases, US Department of the Treasury, published October 29, 2024, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2693>.

technology, it is also a global leader in a number of other technologies. These include artificial intelligence (AI), telecommunication equipment, display technology, electric vehicles and batteries, green energy, robotics and automation, biotech and pharmaceuticals, advanced materials, Internet of Things (IoT) and aerospace. According to the American Chamber of Commerce in Taiwan, Taiwan suppliers accounted for 75 percent of the key components in Tesla automobiles, including the powertrain, body electronics, telematics (e.g., cameras and monitors), battery, and charger.⁸⁵

In recognition of Taiwan's value as a high-tech partner, the United States and Taiwan in December 2020 signed a US-Taiwan Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement, and held a first bilateral meeting in May 2023.⁸⁶ The agreement formalized longstanding cooperation in science and technology, building on decades of collaboration intended to promote joint research, innovation, and technological advancement in critical areas like AI, health, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing.⁸⁷ Also reflecting this important S&T relationship, many US tech giants, including Microsoft, AMD, Google, Nvidia and Meta/Facebook have established AI research and development centers in Taiwan, and Google has located its largest hardware R&D hub outside the United States in Taiwan.⁸⁸ Aware of the importance of developing a startup culture in Taiwan, Taiwan's National Development Council (NDC) launched the "Startup Island Taiwan Silicon Valley Hub" in



Image: An aerial view of the TSMC facility in North Phoenix, Arizona.⁸⁹

January 2025. Located in Palo Alto, California, this new hub seeks to foster the success of Taiwan's startups in the global marketplace by providing professional consulting services, workspace and community platforms.⁹⁰

Taiwan Investment in the United States

Beyond the robust US-Taiwan trade relationship, two-way investment flows are also exceptionally strong. Total stock of Taiwan FDI in the United States is US \$15.6 billion, and the United States has FDI in Taiwan of US \$19.3 billion.⁹¹ Recognizing the economic and strategic risks of not being able to produce advanced semiconductors at scale itself, the United States has encouraged Taiwan's semiconductor companies to establish chip production facilities in the United States. With promised funding from the *CHIPS and Science Act*, TSMC in 2021 broke ground on a US \$12 billion chip fabrication plant ("fab") near Phoenix, Arizona, and announced plans to build additional fabs for an estimated total investment of over US \$65

85 "Transforming the Energy Mix," *Taiwan Business Topics* 50, issue 10 (October 2020) <https://amcham.com.tw/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/October-2020-Taiwan-Business-TOPICS.pdf>.

86 Erik M. Jacobs, "US-Taiwan S&T Dialogue Meets as Collaboration Efforts Between US and Taiwan Expand," *Global Taiwan Brief*, August 23, 2023, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/08/us-taiwan-sampt-dialogue-meets-as-collaboration-efforts-between-us-and-taiwan-expand/>.

87 Ibid.

88 "Taiwan—Global AI Hub," *Reuters*, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/plus/taiwan-global-ai-hub>; Cheng Ting-Fang and Lauly Li, "Google to expand hardware R&D team in Taiwan," *Nikkei Asia*, April 25, 2024, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Supply-Chain/Google-to-expand-hardware-R-D-team-in-Taiwan>.

89 Image source: Wirestock Creators / Shutterstock.com.

90 James Thompson, Su Ssu-yun and Chang Hsin-yu "Taiwan launches overseas tech startup hub in Silicon Valley" *Central News Agency*, January 14, 2025, <https://focustaiwan.tw/sci-tech/202501140008>.

91 Congressional Research Service, "U.S.-Taiwan Trade and Economic Relations," (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 25, 2025), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10256>.

billion.⁹² This was followed by TSMC announcing in March 2025 that it will be investing a further US \$100 billion in the Phoenix project.⁹³ Other high-tech Taiwan companies have announced their own major investments in the United States, including a US \$5 billion investment by Global Wafers in Sherman, Texas, and UMC's joining Intel in a new partnership to produce chips in Intel's facility in Arizona.⁹⁴ In addition to the multibillion-dollar investments by TSMC and other technology companies in the United States, other Taiwan companies are investing billions of dollars more in everything from petrochemicals to food processing. In fact, at the annual SelectUSA investment summits, Taiwan's delegations have consistently been among the largest for the past ten years, with Taiwan investors acquiring or establishing companies in petrochemicals, electronics, communications, automotive parts, metal products, real estate, food and beverages, banking and hotels. To help manage the flourishing bilateral economic relationship, nearly half of US state governments currently maintain representative offices in Taiwan.⁹⁵

92 "Biden-Harris Administration Announces CHIPS Incentives Award with TSMC Arizona to Secure U.S. Leadership in Advanced Semiconductor Technology," Press Releases, US Department of Commerce, released November 15, 2024, <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2024/11/biden-harris-administration-announces-chips-incentives-award-tsmc>).

93 Asa Fitch, Meridith McGraw, and Yang Jie, "Trump, Chip Maker TSMC Announce \$100 Billion Investment in U.S.," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 3, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/tech/trump-chip-maker-tsmc-expected-to-announce-100-billion-investment-in-u-s-02a44399>.

94 Joelle Anselmo, "\$400M in CHIPS funding goes to GlobalWafers," *ManufacturingDive*, July 18, 2024, <https://www.manufacturingdive.com/news/400-million-chips-funding-globalwafers-memc-texas-missouri-plants/721574/>; "Intel and UMC Announce New Foundry Collaboration," Newsroom, Intel, published January 25, 2024, <https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/newsroom/news/ifs-manufacturing-news-2024.html#gs.j7yx87>.

95 CAN English News Staff, "Indiana becomes latest U.S. state to open government office in Taiwan," *Central News Agency*, September 10, 2024, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202409100017>.

On the Outside of Trade Blocs

Although Taiwan has strong trade and investment relationships across the Asia-Pacific region, due to PRC objections it is not a member of any regional trade compacts such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) or the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). Being on the outside of these trade blocs puts Taiwan at a distinct disadvantage in trade and competition with RCEP and CPTPP members. Taiwan recently applied for membership in CPTPP, but with the withdrawal of the United States from the agreement and pressure from the PRC (also a recent applicant) to exclude Taiwan, member countries may not seriously consider Taiwan for membership.⁹⁶ Taiwan has not even applied to RCEP, recognizing that the PRC, one of the most dominant members of the trading bloc, would likely prevent Taiwan from becoming a member.⁹⁷ Taiwan's exclusion from regional trading arrangements is yet another reason why a US-Taiwan FTA would make sense. Not only would it help boost economic and political ties between the United States and Taiwan, but it would also encourage other Taiwan trade partners to consider establishing FTAs with Taiwan. Although there may be little support in Washington for new FTAs, in view of the strong bipartisan support for Taiwan, Taiwan could be the exception.⁹⁸

Dependence on the China Market

Taiwan faces a more immediate trade dilemma due to its dependence on trade with China. As recently as 2019, the percentage of Taiwan exports going to mainland China

96 Shannon Tiezzi, "Taiwan Applies for CPTPP Membership," *The Diplomat*, September 23, 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/taiwan-applies-for-cptpp-membership/>.

97 I-Wei Jennifer Chang, "Asia-Pacific Regional Economic Integration and Taiwan's Exclusion from RCEP," *Global Taiwan Brief*, November 20, 2019, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2019/11/asia-pacific-regional-economic-integration-and-taiwans-exclusion-from-rcep/>.

98 Clete R. Willems, "It's time for a US-Taiwan free trade agreement," *New Atlanticist*, January 23, 2024, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/its-time-for-a-us-taiwan-free-trade-agreement/>.

represented more than 40 percent of total exports, but with the PRC imposing more tariff and non-tariff restrictions on imports from Taiwan, Taiwan has been actively developing alternative options. With the implementation of the New Southbound Policy (NSP), exports going to mainland China have been steadily declining, dropping to around 35 percent in 2023, signifying a trend of decreasing reliance on the mainland market. US export controls on high-end semiconductors, tariffs on China and a push for Taiwan to diversify its trade partners have also contributed to this decline. Indeed, the United States has supported Taiwan's NSP as part of its broader US Indo-Pacific strategy.⁹⁹ The United States has also strengthened economic collaboration with Taiwan by emphasizing economic and development projects through initiatives like the GCTF.¹⁰⁰

Growing Ties with India

One indicator of the success of Taiwan's NSP is its growing engagement with India, whose dynamic economy has the potential to be a counterweight to China. Although India is a relatively new partner for Taiwan, Taiwan-India economic ties are steadily growing, with total trade up from US \$4.7 billion in 2016 to US \$10.9 billion in 2023. In fact, Taiwan's NSP complements India's "Look East" policy, which seeks to build stronger ties with Southeast Asia. During the Ma Administration (2008-16), India indicated an interest in negotiating an FTA with Taiwan. While it remains to be seen if India would still have an interest in an FTA today, Taiwan and India did sign a bilateral investment agreement in 2018 and significant investment deals are going forward. India's electronics minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, in a press conference in early 2024, stated that India's Tata Group and Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconduc-

99 Alan H. Yang and Sana Hashmi, "Taiwan's New Southbound Policy: A Strategic Triumph," *The National Interest*, October 8, 2023, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/taiwan%E2%80%99s-new-southbound-policy-strategic-triumph-206896>.

100 "Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)," American Institute in Taiwan, <https://www.ait.org.tw/global-cooperation-and-training-framework-gctf/>.

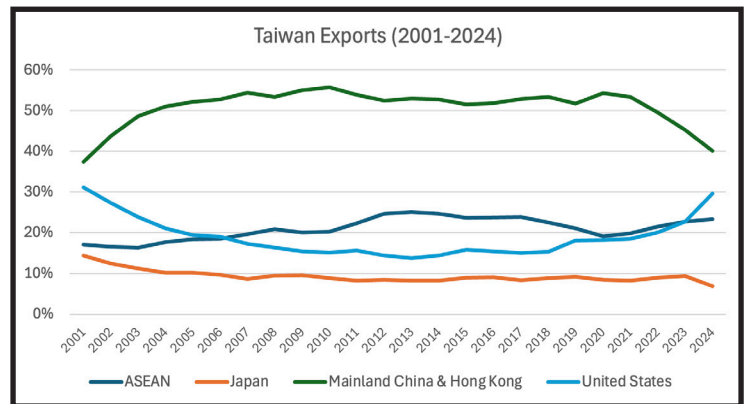


Image: Taiwan exports from 2001 to 2024, the percentage of exports going to mainland China and Hong Kong has declined, while exports to the United States has increased.¹⁰¹

tor Manufacturing Corp. will soon start construction of a semiconductor fab in India, projected to cost US \$11 billion. Taiwan e-scooter company Gogoro is investing US \$1.5 billion in a factory in western Maharashtra to manufacture electric scooters. Foxconn has also expanded its operations in India to assemble Apple iPhones, with a reported total investment of over US \$1.4 billion. In addition, Taiwan has announced that it is planning to begin recruiting Indian workers to alleviate a labor shortage in Taiwan's manufacturing sector.¹⁰²

US Tariff Risks

With the new Trump administration's intense focus on fair, reciprocal trade, there is a possibility that it could consider levying tariffs on imports from Taiwan. Taiwan has posted expanding trade surpluses with the United States in recent years, with the surplus in 2024 reaching US \$73.9 billion, an increase of US \$26.1 bil-

101 Image source: created by GTI using data from the Taiwan Ministry of Finance, <https://web02.mof.gov.tw/njswwww/webMain.aspx?sys=100&funid=edefjsptgl>.

102 Abhijit Mukhopadhyay, "India-Taiwan FTA in the making," Observer Research Foundation, May 30, 2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-taiwan-fta-in-the-making>; Sana Hashmi, "China's Influence on India-Taiwan Economic Dynamics," *Global Taiwan Brief*, May 1, 2024, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2024/05/chinas-influence-on-india-taiwan-economic-dynamics/>.

lion over 2023. Beyond the trade surplus, the Trump administration has expressed concerns about Taiwan having "stolen" US computer chip technology, further raising the prospect that Taiwan could be targeted with tariffs.¹⁰³ To address US concerns, Taiwan's government has indicated that Taiwan will likely increase imports of liquified natural gas (LNG) from the United States (only 10 percent of Taiwan's LNG imports are currently from the United States), and President Lai Ching-te has also pledged to consider a range of other measures, including increased investments in the United States and expanded procurement from the United States.¹⁰⁴ As noted above, TSMC has already announced plans to invest an additional US \$100 billion in its chip production project in Phoenix, Arizona.

Conclusion

Taiwan is a key economic partner for the United States and it is very much in the US interest to strengthen this relationship, especially given Taiwan's dominant position as the world's largest producer of semiconductors, as well as many other high-tech products. It is also a priority to help Taiwan reduce its vulnerability to PRC economic coercion by reducing Taiwan's overreliance on the PRC market and increasing its ties to the United States and other friendly countries. For these reasons alone, the United States should press ahead with more and improved agreements to secure US-Taiwan trade

and investment ties and encourage others to do likewise. This is not only a matter of national security, but also smart economic policy.

The United States should press ahead with more and improved agreements to secure US-Taiwan trade and investment ties and encourage others to do likewise. This is not only a matter of national security, but also smart economic policy.

103 Catie Edmondson and Chris Buckley, "Taiwan Prepares for Trump's Tariffs, and a Changed Washington," *The New York Times*, February 13, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/13/world/asia/taiwan-tariffs-trump.html>.

104 "Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan)," Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), <https://english.president.gov.tw/20250214>.

People-to-People Ties

"It is the policy of the United States—

Section 2

(b)(1) "to preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan..."

(c) "...The preservation and enhancement of the human rights of all the people on Taiwan are hereby reaffirmed as objectives of the United States."

- H.R. 2479, *Taiwan Relations Act of 1979*¹⁰⁵

By: Russell Hsiao and Adrienne Wu¹⁰⁶

People-to-people relations form the bedrock of the longstanding US-Taiwan partnership. Comprising educational, cultural, and even humanitarian activities, people-to-people ties have supported the growing relations between the United States and Taiwan over the last four decades, which have become increasingly multifaceted and strong. People-to-people relations between the United States and Taiwan predate the signing of the *Taiwan Relations Act of 1979*. Still, since the severance of diplomatic relations between the US and ROC governments, the continuity and growth of people-to-people ties has helped to humanize the significant interests and the enormous stakes

Given significant ongoing changes in the geopolitical environment and a growing recognition of the strategic nature of Taiwan's soft power assets in the cultural and educational space, the policy foundation for deepening people-to-people ties between the United States and Taiwan has broadened over recent years.

for all sides, especially in the absence of formal relations. Together with the increasingly robust economic relationship and changing geopolitical environment, they balance the hard power elements of international relations and promote trust and mutual understanding between the United States and Taiwan that are vital to the bilateral relationship.

Under the *Taiwan Relations Act*, which protects and facilitates the US-Taiwan relationship over the past 46 years in the absence of diplomatic ties, many people-to-people initiatives have contributed to the strengthening of the bilateral relationship based on the shared values of democracy, freedom, and human rights. Despite the importance of the people-to-people relationship, this aspect of the partnership remains an understated and underappreciated area of the bilateral relationship. This section of the report maps out the current state of people-to-people ties between the United States and Taiwan, highlights the significant progress made in recent years, and describes how people-to-people diplomacy can be better leveraged to not only to achieve other foreign policy goals such as economic gains or political ties but also an end in itself.

Given significant ongoing changes in the geopolitical environment and a growing recognition of the strategic nature of Taiwan's soft power assets in the cultural and educational space, the policy foundation for deepening people-to-people ties between the United States and Taiwan has broadened over recent years. New legal instruments, which include the signing of the MOU on international education collaboration and launch of the *US-Taiwan Education Initiative* in 2020¹⁰⁷ and the sign-

struments, which include the signing of the MOU on international education collaboration and launch of the *US-Taiwan Education Initiative* in 2020¹⁰⁷ and the sign-

105 *Taiwan Relations Act*, Publ. L. No. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14 (1979).

106 The authors would also like to thank Yuchen Lee for his research assistance.

107 US Department of State, *Memorandum of Understanding*

ing of the *Science and Technology Agreement*; the passage of the *Taiwan Fellowship Act* in 2022,¹⁰⁸ and *United States-Taiwan Public Health Protection Act* to name only a few, have supplemented the robust foundation of the people-to-people ties between the United States and Taiwan.¹⁰⁹

US-Taiwan relations have a unique and important advantage: people. Unlike the PRC, which has weaponized its overseas community to serve the CCP's political interests, Taiwan and its diaspora—which overlap with those claimed by the PRC—are neither coerced nor co-opted to serve its interests. Moreover, traditionally those who have immigrated or moved to the United States have helped to strengthen the ties between the United States and Taiwan. In addition to more effective implementation of the aforementioned measures, five priority areas in people-to-people ties are ripe for further growth: (1) deepening and broadening education initiatives, (2) legislative exchanges, (3) subnational diplomacy, (4) multi-lateralizing people-to-people ties and (5) enhancing people-to-people contacts with specialists in the public health and science and technology sectors.

The Importance of “People” for People-to-People Exchanges

First articulated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his People-to-People Program in 1956, people-to-people diplomacy is aimed at enhancing understanding and friendship between nations through educational, cultural, and humanitarian activities, involving the exchange of ideas

ding Between the American Institute in Taiwan and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States on International Education Cooperation, (Washington, DC: 2020), https://common.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/68/2022/03/AIT_MOU.pdf.

108 James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, 136 Stat. 2395 (2022).

109 Ibid.



Image: The US and Taiwan flags displayed on Boston's Chinatown arch.¹¹⁰

and experiences directly among people.¹¹¹ Scholars of public diplomacy refer to the mission that builds friendships and interpersonal understanding through exchange programs, tourism, collaborative efforts and cultural, sports engagements as “relational public diplomacy.”¹¹²

Most nations engage in various forms of people-to-people diplomacy. People-to-people relations can support the development of positive public opinion that in turn can help reinforce government policies and deepen ties between two countries. When two like-minded democracies engage in effective reciprocal people-to-people diplomacy, it can also bolster support for government policies. If the countries' policies are aligned, stronger people-to-people ties can generate political support, which can then help sustain the policy. The inverse is also true. In the context of poor people-to-people ties, negative public opinion can diminish trust and undermine political support for the government's policies, which could be aimed at strengthening ties with the other country.

110 Image source: eskystudio / Shutterstock.com.

111 “People-To-People Program” Online Documents, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Museum, & Boyhood Home, National Archives, Accessed March 25, 2025, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/people-people-program>.

112 Kadir Jun Ayhan, “A Typology of People-To-People Diplomacy,” USC Center on Public Diplomacy, March 12, 2020, <https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/typology-people-people-diplomacy>.

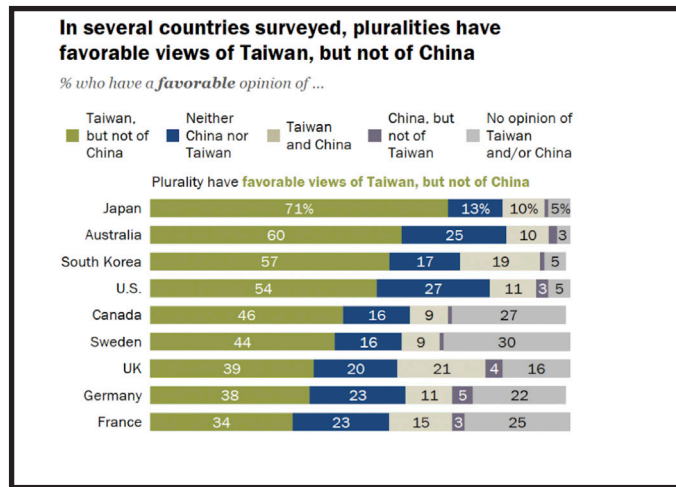
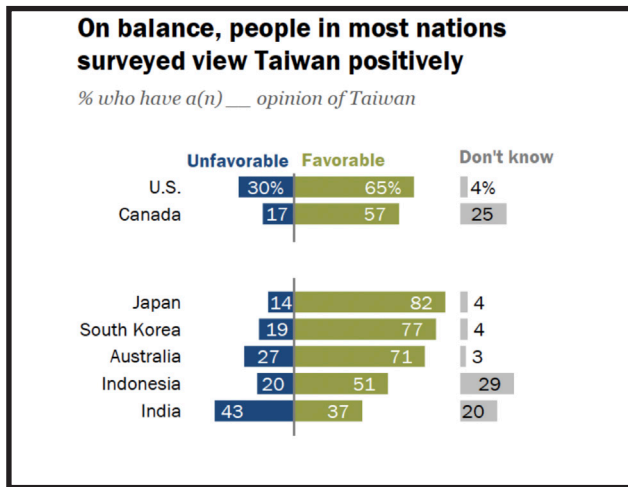


Figure 1: Public opinion of Taiwan (left). Figure 2: Public opinion of Taiwan in comparison to China (right). Figure source: Pew Research Center.

There is an important distinction to be made in terms of how democracies and totalitarian systems conduct people-to-people diplomacy. In democracies, which have competitive party systems, there is often a clear separation between the government's, the party's, and even the civil society's interests. Although the interests of these actors are sometimes aligned, they are still distinguishable. In such context, people-to-people exchanges can support trust building. Within one-party Marxist-Leninist regimes that do not permit real party competition or the formation of genuine civil society and, more importantly, seek to politically control every strata of society, people-to-people exchanges are never genuinely between the people. This distinction has always made the development of people-to-people relations between countries of different political systems asymmetric and often lacking in reciprocity.

To be clear, there are limits to the role of public attitudes and opinion in influencing a country's foreign policy and international relations. Public support, particularly in democratic countries, can be a source of legitimacy for the government to implement its policy and in furtherance of its interaction with other countries.¹¹³ Although it is not singularly critical for

policy, public opinion is nevertheless important for policy implementation. This is even more so in the case of US-Taiwan relations given the nature of the US-Taiwan relations. Therefore, when analyzing the *Taiwan Relations Act's* impact on US-Taiwan relations, it is important to understand public attitudes in each country.

American and Taiwanese Public Opinion

While the views of US leaders can be expressed and parsed from policy and official statements, the sentiments of the American public are less readily observable, generalizable, and therefore less well-understood within the broader policy discourse. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of surveys conducted to address this gap.¹¹⁴

US and Taiwanese Public Opinion on US-Taiwan Relations

According to polling done by the Pew Research Center in 2023, 65 percent of Americans have a favor-

113 Pawel Zerka, "Why Should Anyone Care? Foreign Policy and Public Opinion," European Council on Foreign Relations, April 19, 2021, <https://ecfr.eu/article/why-should-an->

[yone-care-foreign-policy-and-public-opinion/](https://www.pewresearch.org/long-term-trends/foreign-policy-and-public-opinion/).

114 Russell Hsiao, "Recent Trendlines in American Public Opinion on the Defense of Taiwan," *Global Taiwan Brief*, November 1, 2023, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/11/recent-trendlines-in-american-public-opinion-on-the-defense-of-taiwan/>.

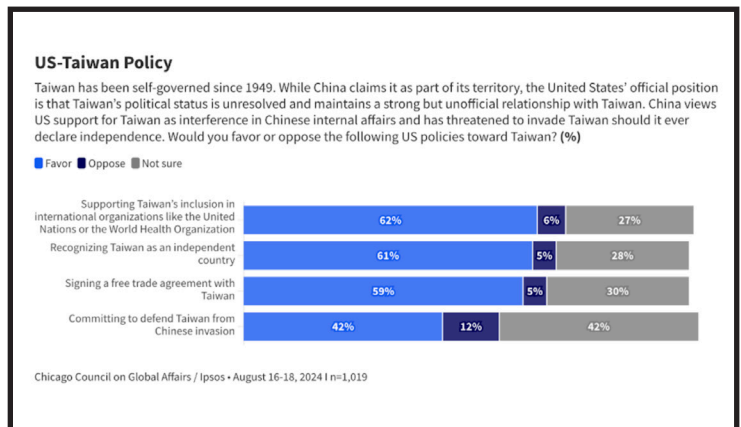
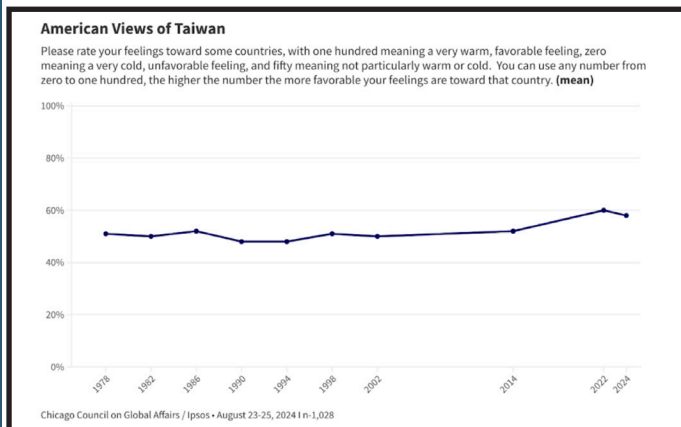


Figure 3: American views of Taiwan over time (left). Figure 4: Support for US-Taiwan Policy (right).
Figure source: The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

able opinion of Taiwan (as shown above in figure 1). Among the 24 countries surveyed, the United States had the fifth highest proportion of people who favor Taiwan, after Japan, South Korea, Australia and Israel.¹¹⁵ When compared to American views on China, 54 percent had a favorable opinion of Taiwan, but not China, while only 3 percent of respondents preferred China to Taiwan (as shown in figure 2 on the previous page).¹¹⁶

Another poll conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2024 (as shown in figure 3) supports the finding that American views of Taiwan have gradually warmed over time.¹¹⁷ In its Feeling Thermometer survey, Taiwan received a 58 in 2024, similar to the 60 it received in 2022, but is a clear uptrend compared to the average of 50 in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, majorities support Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations (62 percent) and favor a US-Taiwan free trade agreement (59 percent). Surprisingly, there are even 61 percent of Americans who

support recognizing Taiwan as an independent country. Therefore, high ratings in Americans' favorability towards Taiwan correlate with greater public support for US policies that support Taiwan (figure 4).¹¹⁸

In terms of Taiwanese public opinion of the United States, existing research presents a generally positive result. The Pew Research Center suggested in 2020 that 68 percent of Taiwanese have a favorable opinion of the United States, with 85 percent supporting closer economic ties and 79 percent supporting closer political ties with the United States.¹¹⁹ Nevertheless, a survey by Academia Sinica, Taiwan's top government research institution, in 2023 found that only 34 percent of Taiwanese agree that the United States is a trustworthy country, dropping by more than 11 percent from 2021. Experts

115 Christine Huang and Laura Clancy, "Taiwan Seen More Favorably than Not across 24 Countries." Pew Research Center, August 11, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/08/11/taiwan-seen-more-favorably-than-not-across-24-countries/>.

116 Ibid.

117 Craig Kafura, "On Taiwan, Americans Favor the Status Quo," The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2024, <https://globalaffairs.org/research/public-opinion-survey/taiwan-americans-favor-status-quo>.

118 Craig Kafura, Lu-Huei Chen, and Nathan Batto, "What do people in Taiwan and the United States think about Taiwan's security situation?" moderated by Ryan Hass, online event, January 9, 2025, by the Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/events/what-do-people-in-taiwan-and-the-united-states-think-about-taiwans-security-situation/>.

119 Christine Huang and Kat Devlin, "How People in Taiwan View Mainland China and the U.S." Pew Research Center, May 12, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/05/12/in-taiwan-views-of-mainland-china-mostly-negative/>; Craig Kafura, Lu-Huei Chen, and Nathan Batto, "What do people in Taiwan and the United States think about Taiwan's security situation?" moderated by Ryan Hass, online event, January 9, 2025, by the Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/events/what-do-people-in-taiwan-and-the-united-states-think-about-taiwans-security-situation/>.

indicate that this decline might have resulted from the US response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine War, in addition to Chinese propaganda and disinformation campaigns to undermine US credibility.¹²⁰

The Roles of the Diasporas and Business Communities

Americans of Taiwanese descent and the Taiwanese diaspora within the United States are instrumental in further deepening US-Taiwan ties. Alongside Americans in Taiwan and the business communities, which are active in both countries, they form the foundation of the robust bilateral people-to-people and commercial ties between the United States and Taiwan.



*Image: Taiwan flags displayed in San Francisco.*¹²¹

The 1970s-1990s saw a mass wave of Taiwanese immigrants to the United States. Many parents of Taiwanese Americans immigrated to the United States to start a new life and give future generations a better future, as well as to escape political persecution.

120 Chi-hui Lin, “Taiwan Poll Shows Dip in US Trust amid Growing Concern over China.” *The Guardian*, November 23, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/23/taiwan-poll-shows-dip-in-us-trust-amid-growing-concern-over-china>.; John Dotson, “Chinese Information Operations against Taiwan: The ‘Abandoned Chess Piece’ and ‘America Skepticism Theory,’” Global Taiwan Institute, 2023, https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/OR_ASTAW0807FINAL.pdf.

121 Image source: NorCalStockMedia / Shutterstock.com.

Some had fought for human rights and democracy in Taiwan during the period of martial law, and many brought that same strength and passion for human rights to developing people-to-people bonds between Taiwan and their new adopted homeland. Now that Taiwan is a robust democracy and remains a partner of the United States, second and third-generation Taiwanese Americans continue to strengthen and deepen those bonds with other Americans who have become more familiarized with the island democracy.

The number of Taiwanese Americans in the United States is estimated to be around 310,000 in 2021.¹²² The demographic is also relatively wealthy compared to other immigrant groups and is second only to the median wealth of Indian American households.¹²³ Among Asian Americans, Taiwanese Americans also have very positive views of the United States, with 76 percent holding very/somewhat favorable views of the United States, which also helps strengthen US-Taiwan relation.¹²⁴

Taiwan’s Overseas Community Affairs Council

While there can be some sensitivity of any foreign governments’ relations with their overseas communities, these communities can also be powerful advocates for strengthening and deepening ties. In this sense, US-Taiwan relations have an important advantage in their engagements.

Taiwan’s Overseas Community Affairs Council was established to help organize and connect with these communities and play an important role in helping the two sides identity and work on shared objectives. While not designed to directly support such initiatives, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), which was estab-

122 USAFacts team, “The Diverse Demographics of Asian Americans,” USA Facts, May 17, 2021, <https://usafacts.org/articles/the-diverse-demographics-of-asian-americans/>.

123 Ibid.

124 Carolyn Im, Christine Huang, Laura Silver, and Neil G. Ruiz, “6. Taiwanese Americans’ Views of Taiwan and Other Places.” Pew Research Center, July 19, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2023/07/19/taiwanese-americans-views-of-taiwan-and-other-places/>.

lished by the *Taiwan Relations Act*, could also play a more active role in facilitating people-to-people exchanges, which would help to better inform not only the US government bureaucracy, but also the American people about the US-Taiwan bilateral relationship.

Americans and American Businesses in Taiwan

Since Taiwan's participation in the Visa Waiver Program in 2012, travel from Taiwan to the United States has increased 60 percent. In 2018, there were more than 1 million people that traveled between the United States and Taiwan. According to another estimate, on any given day, there are over 80,000 US citizens in Taiwan. While this figure is relatively low compared to countries like South Korea and Japan, it should be no surprise that the volume of services performed by AIT's American Citizens Services unit is similar to that of much larger embassies such as Beijing and Seoul.¹²⁵

On the business front, “[t]he United States and Taiwan boast an excellent trade relationship with Taiwan ranked as the 8th largest trading partner to the United States and the United States ranked as the second-largest trading partner to Taiwan, with two-way trade-in-goods volume of US \$127.5 billion in 2023.”¹²⁶

The Strategic Importance of People-to-People Amid US-China Strategic Competition

While not the primary focus nor the most important factor for the bilateral relationship, people-to-people ties also serve a broader strategic imperative. In light of the PRC's global propaganda efforts, which are not only aimed at promoting its national interests but also at undermining the

125 Nolan Masterson, “A Solid Foundation - State Magazine,” *State Magazine*, May 15, 2019, <https://statemag.state.gov/2019/05/a-solid-foundation/>.

126 “Business,” American Institute in Taiwan, <https://www.ait.org.tw/business/>.

credibility of the United States, enhancing people-to-people ties will be even more critical to ensure that CCP's malign influence does not undermine well-intentioned policies that strengthen and deepen US-Taiwan relations.

According to the GTI study, “Chinese Information Operations against Taiwan: The ‘Abandoned Chess Piece’ and ‘America Skepticism Theory’”: “The narratives of ‘America Skepticism Theory’ have come to occupy a prominent place in Taiwan’s information.”¹²⁷ According to one poll in 2023, only 33 percent “trust the United States.”¹²⁸ This is an ongoing trend and exists not only in Taiwan but also in other key US allies. As such, a successful people-to-people diplomacy initiative with Taiwan can provide a model for the US government in its efforts to counter PRC propaganda in other allies and like-minded partners.

US and Taiwan People-to-People Policy Initiatives

The Integrated Mission Strategy of the American Institute in Taiwan—the *de facto* US embassy in Taiwan—underscores how deepening people-to-people ties and increasing interchange between the United States and Taiwan are the foundation of “mutual strength and security.”¹²⁹ To achieve this goal, the AIT is committed to utilizing the following tools to broaden, diversify and deepen cultural and educational ties between the two nations:

Fulbright Taiwan and the US-Taiwan Education Initiative

Supported by the AIT, and Taiwan's Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Foundation for Scholarly Exchange—also known as Fulbright Taiwan—has been one of the most enduring ways for the

127 Dotson, “Chinese Information Operations against Taiwan: The ‘Abandoned Chess Piece’ and ‘America Skepticism Theory.’”

128 Chien-Huei Wu, James Lee, Wen-China Wu, and Hsin-Hsin Pan, “2023 Survey Results of the ‘American Portrait’- Press Release,” *Academia Sinica*, August 11, 2023, <https://www.american-portrait.tw/l/2023-survey-results-of-the-american-portrait-press-release/>.

129 US Department of State, *Integrated Mission Strategy—American Institute in Taiwan*, (Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2022), https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/IMS_EAP_Taiwan_18MAR2022_PUBLIC.pdf.



Image: 2022-2023 US Grantees attending an orientation and welcome party being held by Fulbright Taiwan.¹³⁰

United States and Taiwan to maintain people-to-people ties. Since 1957, the program has financed over 1,600 Taiwan grantees to visit the United States and over 1,700 US grantees to visit Taiwan.¹³¹ In addition to grants and scholarships for language study, the program also supports grantees in pursuing masters and doctoral degrees, scholars-in-residence opportunities, and gaining career specific skills for arts professionals and education administrators. Moreover, Fulbright has been able to expand due to recent initiatives, such as the US-Taiwan Education Initiative.

Launched in 2020, the US-Taiwan Education Initiative “aimed at expanding access to Chinese and English language instruction, while safeguarding academic freedom. Specifically, the Initiative [would] highlight and enhance Taiwan’s role in providing Chinese language instruction to Americans and to people around the world.”¹³² The initiative was driven by two related trends: the closing of Confucius Institutes in US uni-

versities’ due to their role in censorship and malign influence campaigns by the PRC and Taiwan’s growing investment in English language instruction.¹³³ In line with these trends, Taipei could further expand cooperation with the United States and attract more foreigners to Taiwan by creating an English teaching program similar to Japan’s Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program or South Korea’s English Program in Korea (EPIK)—in other words, a Taiwanese government initiated program that could run parallel to English teaching programs under Fulbright Taiwan.



Image: The launching ceremony of Taiwan Center for Mandarin Learning-Silicon Valley Chinese School.¹³⁴

Since its launch, Taiwan has signed 26 education MOUs with 24 US states and established 66 Taiwan Centers for Mandarin Learning (TCMLs) in the United States.¹³⁵ Moreover, 103 Taiwan-US sister schools were established at the elementary and

130 Image source: "New Year, New Journey! FSE Welcomes 2022-2023 Fulbright U.S. Grantees (Research and Study Category)," Fulbright Taiwan, September 7, 2022, <https://www.fulbright.org.tw/fse-welcomes-2022-2023-us-grantees/>.

131 "About Us," Fulbright Taiwan, accessed March 25, 2025, https://www.fulbright.org.tw/about/#fulbright_program.

132 "The Launch of the U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative," American Institute in Taiwan, December 3, 2020, <https://www.ait.org.tw/the-launch-of-the-u-s-taiwan-education-initiative/>.

133 "The U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative: Increased Cooperation on Mandarin and English Language Education," American Institute in Taiwan, December 3, 2020, https://www.ait.org.tw/the-us-taiwan-education-initiative/?fbclid=IwY2x-jawHJPR4BHUZL2_YugayyGXCe4p-TWBLOR4hEO-CJ-FRB-i4i5V-qfR_GxDYKtdhUCmg.

134 Image source: "OCAC Minister CHEN-YUAN TUNG attended the launching ceremony of Taiwan Center for Mandarin Learning-Silicon Valley Chinese School," Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in San Francisco, undated, accessed March 28, 2025, https://www.roc-taiwan.org/ussfo_en/album/12/photo/3512.html.

135 "U.S.-TAIWAN EDUCATION INITIATIVE FACT-SHEET 2024," American Institute in Taiwan, March 5, 2024, <https://www.ait.org.tw/u-s-taiwan-education-initiative-fact-sheet-2024/>.

secondary school level.¹³⁶ At the same time, at least 111 Confucius Institutes¹³⁷ have closed in the United States. Therefore, while the number of new TCMLs does not replace the number of closed Confucius Institutes, it is undeniable that the number of TCMLs is still trending upwards. However, with 88 TCMLs set up in the United States and Europe as of February 2025,¹³⁸ Taiwan's Overseas Community Affairs Council is still shy of their goal of opening 100 centers by 2025.¹³⁹

Student Exchanges

There is a long history of student exchanges between the United States and Taiwan. Between 1950 and 1989 there were over 100,000 students from Taiwan who studied in the United States.¹⁴⁰ A considerable number of Taiwan elites and opinion leaders have been educated in the United States, and this remains a vital conduit mutual understanding through people-to-people ties. Moreover, the number of Taiwanese students who choose to study in the United States has continued to grow. The US 2024 Open Door Report showed that the number of Taiwanese students enrolled at US colleges and universities during the 2023-2024 academic year increased to 23,157 from 21,834, marking a 6.1 percent year-on-year increase, which is in line with a steady increase of Taiwanese students coming to the United States that only paused

during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴¹

Still, this trend does not just hold true for Taiwanese students—declining numbers of Chinese universities hosting exchanges, coupled with increased funding under the US-Taiwan Education Initiative, has also made Taiwan a more attractive study abroad location for US students. Funding for Fulbright Taiwan has increased yearly since 2020, totaling US \$1 million in 2023 and 2024.¹⁴² Additionally, there has been increased funding from Taiwan for US State Department-managed exchange programs, with Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributing US \$1.06 million in 2023 and US \$1.57 million in 2024 for the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y), Critical Language Scholarship (CLS), and the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program (Gilman).¹⁴³ The growth of these programs make it evident that the US-Taiwan Education Initiative is a two-way collaboration, with both Washington and Taipei contributing funds and resources to provide more programs and opportunities.

As a result of these increases in funding and geopolitical tensions, growing numbers of US students have chosen to study in Taiwan rather than in China. The number of US students studying in Taiwan increased from 468 in 2021/2022 to 1,685 students in 2022/2023, which marks a 260 percent change, and is more than pre-pandemic levels (1,270 US students were studying in Taiwan in the academic year of 2018-2019).¹⁴⁴ These numbers are also higher than the US students in China, with 469 students in China during the 2022-2023 academic year and 11,639 US students in China from 2018-2019.¹⁴⁵ Although the US-Taiwan Education Initiative is not the sole reason for this change, it is undeniable that increasingly more US students are choosing

136 Ibid.

137 “How Many Confucius Institutes Are in the United States?” National Association of Scholars, June 20, 2023, https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/how_many_confucius_institutes_are_in_the_united_states.

138 “88 TCMLs have been set up so far!” Announcements, Taiwan Center for Mandarin Learning, accessed March 25, 2025, <https://taiwancenter.taiwan-world.net/news/Announcement/content/82>.

139 “U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative Factsheet 2023,” American Institute in Taiwan, February 22, 2023, <https://www.ait.org.tw/u-s--taiwan-education-initiative-factsheet-2023/>.

140 “People to People Ties: The Bedrock of the U.S.-Taiwan Partnership,” American Institute in Taiwan, Published June 11, 2024, <https://www.ait.org.tw/people-to-people-ties-the-bedrock-of-the-us-taiwan-partnership/>.

141 “2024 Open Doors Report: Number of Taiwanese Students in U.S. Increases 6.1 Percent to 23,157,” American Institute in Taiwan, Published November 19, 2024, <https://www.ait.org.tw/2024-open-doors-report/>.

142 “US-Taiwan Education Initiative Factsheet 2023.”

143 “US-TAIWAN EDUCATION INITIATIVE FACTSHEET 2024.”

144 “All Destinations,” US Study Abroad, Opendoors, accessed March 25, 2025, <https://opendoorsdata.org/data/us-study-abroad/all-destinations/>.

145 Ibid.

to study abroad in Taiwan over China, and having increased funding to support interested participants further bolsters this trend.

University-to-University Ties

The spreading of university-to-university partnerships has also allowed for greater cooperation between academic institutions. Some of these programs highlight Taiwan's Mandarin learning; for instance, Taiwan's Ministry of Education launched the Taiwan Huayu BEST Program in 2021, which has led to 20 Taiwan universities establishing school-to-school Mandarin teaching partnerships with 56 US universities.¹⁴⁶ According to Taiwan's Ministry of Education, the program "provides opportunities for language teacher exchanges, access to Huayu BEST scholarships for students in the US, and access to Chinese language proficiency testing, and online learning resources for all partner universities in the US."¹⁴⁷ Some US universities that have created partnerships with Taiwan universities through the Huayu BEST Program are: Indiana University, Michigan State University, University of California, Santa Barbara, and University of Maryland.¹⁴⁸

As Taiwan has become more well-known for its semiconductor manufacturing industry, science and tech-

146 "US-TAIWAN EDUCATION INITIATIVE FACT-SHEET 2024."

147 "Taiwan Huayu BEST Program Finds Warm Welcome in the Southern US," News Updates, Ministry of Education Republic of China (Taiwan), January 31, 2023, <https://english.moe.gov.tw/cp-117-34120-3cdd2-1.html>.

148 Victoria (Kai-Wie) Cheng, "From Individuals to Institutions, the Blossoming Educational Impact of the IU-NTU Partnership – IU Global," Indiana University Global, April 17, 2024, <https://blogs.iu.edu/iuglobal/2024/04/17/from-individuals-to-institutions-the-blossoming-educational-impact-of-the-iu-ntu-partnership/>; "19 Universities in Taiwan & the US Sign Taiwan Huayu BEST Program MOUs at NAFSA 2022 Launching New Education Partnerships," News Updates, Ministry of Education Republic of China (Taiwan), June 2, 2022, <https://english.moe.gov.tw/cp-117-31871-00629-1.html>; "Agreement between Taiwanese, U.S. Universities a Milestone in Bilateral Education Cooperation," TECRO Activities, About TECRO, Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States 駐美國台北經濟文化代表處, August 13, 2022, https://www.roc-taiwan.org/us_en/post/11468.html.



Image: 2022 Taiwan Huayu BEST Program Joint MOU Signing Ceremony.¹⁴⁹

nology cooperation between US and Taiwan universities has also increased. In the summer of 2023, Arizona State University's Thunderbird School of Global Management launched their Taiwan Going Global Initiative, which—in cooperation with Soochow University and the StanShih Foundation—aims to develop global management talent capable of supporting the internationalization of Taiwan's semiconductor industry.¹⁵⁰ Additionally, in November 2023, the University of Texas system announced that they had signed an MOU with the University Academic Alliance in Taiwan (UAAT).¹⁵¹ When announcing the partnership, UT System Chancellor James B. Milliken highlighted the partnership's focus on semiconductor development, stating that the agreement will strengthen "the important work we have been doing to advance the semiconductor industry in the US"¹⁵² In 2024, the University of Washington also partnered with the National Tai-

149 Image source: "19 Universities in Taiwan & the US Sign Taiwan Huayu BEST Program MOUs at NAFSA 2022 Launching New Education Partnerships."

150 Dasi Styles, "Thunderbird School to Collaborate on Propelling Semiconductor, Technology Sectors in Taiwan | ASU News," Arizona State University News, July 27, 2023, <https://news.asu.edu/20230727-thunderbird-school-collaborates-stanshih-foundation-soochow-university-propel-semiconductor>.

151 "UT System and University Academic Alliance in Taiwan Enter Partnership Agreement," News Center, The University of Texas System, November 30, 2023, <https://www.utsystem.edu/news/2023/11/29/ut-system-and-university-academic-alliance-taiwan-enter-partnership-agreement>.

152 Ibid.

wan University to create a study-abroad program focused on Taiwan's semiconductor industry.¹⁵³ As these different partnerships show, there are opportunities for Taiwan and US universities to work together on different topics of mutual interest beyond just language exchanges. Moreover, collaboration in these other areas can aid talent flow between the two countries and improve industrial cooperation—which, considering talent shortages in Taiwan and the US expansion of Taiwan's semiconductor industry through initiatives like the *CHIPS and Science Act*, will become increasingly important in the years to come.

International Visiting Leadership Program (IVLP)

Another facet of the exchange programs between the United States and Taiwan is the International Visiting Leadership Program (IVLP) is a professional program meant to bring current and emerging leaders to the United States in order to “[build] trust and collaboration between US and international counterparts, supports US foreign policy goals, and strengthens global alliances.”¹⁵⁴ According to

the Global Ties website, the IVLP has introduced over 225,000 global leaders (including 500 current or former heads of state or government) to

While there have been notable legislative achievements in authorizing new people-to-people initiatives that help strengthen national security, there is a need for the faithful implementation of these acts.

counterparts in the United States.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, the program had 4,400 participants in 2023. Notable alumni from Taiwan who have participated in the IVLP are former Taiwan presidents Ma Ying-jeou and Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁).¹⁵⁶

In addition to making sure that Taiwan participants are represented in the IVLP, there are other steps that US Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) could do to ensure greater Taiwanese participation and representation. For instance, while there are special initiatives that focus on emerging entrepreneurs and leaders from Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America—the Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative (YTILI), the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), and the Young Leaders of the Americas Initiative (YLAI) respectively—there are currently no special initiatives focused regionally on Northeast Asia.

Taiwan Fellowship Act

First introduced by Congress in 2021 and signed into law by former President Joseph Biden, *The Taiwan Fellowship Act* is a bill that would mandate the creation of a Taiwan Fellowship Program for US government employees to travel to and learn about Taiwan.¹⁵⁷ As part of the program, selected participants would spend two years in Taiwan—the first year focuses on learning Mandarin Chinese, and the second year is spent working in either a Taiwanese government agency or a nongovernmental organization. While the *Act* represents an important opportunity for

participants would spend two years in Taiwan—the first year focuses on learning Mandarin Chinese, and the second year is spent working in either a Taiwanese government agency or a nongovernmental organization. While the *Act* represents an important opportunity for

153 Juliette Rihl, “U.S.-Taiwan Academic Partnerships Are Exploding. Here’s Why - Domino Theory,” *Domino Theory*, February 5, 2024, <https://dominotheory.com/u-s-taiwan-academic-partnerships-are-exploding-here-why/>.

154 “The International Visitor Leadership Program,” Global Ties U.S., <https://www.globaltiesus.org/programs/ivlp/>.

155 Ibid.

156 “Securing the Future with More U.S.-Taiwan Exchange Programs,” Blogs, Institute for Public Diplomacy & Global Communication, George Washington University, January 10, 2017, <https://blogs.gwu.edu/ipdgcsmartpower/2017/01/10/securing-the-future-with-more-u-s-taiwan-exchange-programs/>.

157 *Taiwan Fellowship Act*, S. 4327, 116th Cong. (2019-2020).

increased engagement and people-to-people ties, as of 2024, the program has still not been established. Additionally, on May 15, 2024, a bipartisan group of Senators that included Senator Edward J. Markey (D-MA) and then-Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) wrote to then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken to urge the US Department of State to finalize an agreement with Taipei.¹⁵⁸

The enactment of the *Taiwan Fellowship Act* would fill two existing gaps when it comes to US-Taiwan relations. First, it would help Taiwan to overcome the years restricting contact between US and Taiwan government officials. Second, it would create an existing program that ensures Taiwan is better understood by government employees. Luckily, considering that Senator Marco Rubio is not only a cosigner of the letter urging for the implementation of *The Taiwan Fellowship Act*, but also assumed the position of Secretary of State with Trump's return to office, we can hope that there will be future movement under the Trump Administration. As the Senators noted in their letter to Blinken: "The Taiwan Fellowship Program is a tangible manifestation of a principled foreign policy committed both to supporting a key democratic partner and building a generation of American foreign affairs professionals with needed expertise on Taiwan."¹⁵⁹

United States-Taiwan Public Health Protection Act

As the human death toll of the COVID-19 pandemic laid bare, global health intelligence is an increasingly important part of national security. Given Taiwan's remarkable handling of COVID-19, which will unfortunately not be the last global pandemic, in both attempt-



Image: Then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and former President Tsai Ing-wen during their August 03, 2022 meeting.¹⁶⁰

ing to alert the international community about the emergent dire health risks and also in minimizing the infections within the country, Taiwan is well placed for the establishment of an Infectious Disease Monitoring Center (or a fusion center for infectious diseases). This can address the real challenges of global public health by having a forward deployed monitoring of infectious diseases and also to help overcome limitations to Taiwan's international space set by the PRC. With US leadership, Washington should consider establishing a global Biodefense Fusion Center¹⁶¹ in Taiwan in conjunction with like-minded allies and partners.

Parliamentary Exchange

US-Taiwan Legislative Exchanges

158 "Markey, Rubio, Colleagues Urge Biden Administration to Finalize Agreement to Implement U.S.-Taiwan Fellowship Program," News | Press, Ed Markey United States Senator for Massachusetts, May 15, 2024, <https://www.markey.senate.gov/news/press-releases/markey-rubio-colleagues-urge-biden-administration-to-finalize-agreement-to-implement-u-s-taiwan-fellowship-program>.

159 Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Dan Sullivan, Edward J. Markey, James Lankford, Jeffrey A. Merkley, Jerry Moran, John Cornyn, Joni K. Ernst, Marco Rubio, and Ron Wyden to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, May 15, 2024, https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/taiwan_fellowship_oversight_letter_51524.pdf.

160 Image source: "Pelosi And Tsai Wave Hands by Chien," Wikimedia Commons, August 3, 2022, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Pelosi_And_Tsai_Wave_Hands_by_Chien.jpg.

161 Deon Canyon, Jacob Baker, Michael Baker, and Sebastian Kevany, "A Biodefense Fusion Center to Improve Disease Surveillance and Early Warnings to Enhance National Security - Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies," (Honolulu, HI: Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2021), https://dkiapcss.edu/nexus_articles/a-biodefense-fusion-center-to-improve-disease-surveillance-and-early-warnings-to-enhance-national-security/.

From 2016 to March 2024, Taiwan's Legislative Yuan has had 296 interactions with other countries.¹⁶² Out of those interactions, 26 interactions (the second highest after Japan with 48 interactions) have been with the United States. In 2024, several US congressional delegations visited Taiwan to discuss US-Taiwan relations, regional security, trade and investment, and other issues of mutual interest. The delegations were overwhelmingly bipartisan, with every delegation (excepting the visit from only Senator Jeff Markley) consisting of both Democratic and Republican representatives. Moreover, the May 29 delegation was co-led by Democratic Senator Tammy Duckworth and Republican Senator Dan Sullivan.¹⁶³ During the visits, the congressional delegations met with senior Taiwan leaders and members of Taiwan's civil society—once again emphasizing the importance of Taiwan's civil society in US-Taiwan relations.

Although the substantive value of the visit has been debated, then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taiwan was also the highest-level US dignitary visit since former US House Speaker Newt Gingrich visited Taiwan in 1997.¹⁶⁴ The fact that the Pelosi visit established a new status quo for Beijing's aggressions against Taiwan¹⁶⁵ also underscores Beijing's continued attempts to

influence US-Taiwan interactions through military responses.

In addition to maintaining a sufficient tempo in Congressional exchanges between the United States and Taiwan, these exchanges could be utilized more effectively to further policy goals. In this regard, the US-Japan-Taiwan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue provides a useful model. Held between key lawmakers with appropriate areas of jurisdiction in legislative oversight, the first of these dialogues began in July 2021. The second round of these dialogues were held in November 2022. This initiative should be expanded and built upon by key allies and



like-minded partners.

Image: Rotating IPAC delegation head and member of the UK Parliament Sarah Champion presents a map showing the median line of the Taiwan Strait to President Lai on behalf of participating IPAC members.¹⁶⁶

Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China

Launched in 2020, the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) was formed with the aim to bring together like-minded legislators “who are united in the belief that only by standing together and demanding accountability from China, will democratic countries uphold the rules-based system.”¹⁶⁷ Over the four years that IPAC has been

162 “Important Visitors,” Congressional Diplomacy, Legislative Yuan, Republic of China (Taiwan), <https://www.ly.gov.tw/Pages/List.aspx?nodeid=117>.

163 “U.S. Congressional Delegation Visits Taiwan,” American Institute in Taiwan, Published May 29, 2024, https://www.ait.org.tw/u-s-congressional-delegation-visits-taiwan-duckworthsullivan/?_ga=2.92843416.46260254.1736282891-1286438988.1736282891.

164 中央社提供, “第10屆立法院國會外交亮眼 逾80國3500位外賓到訪.” Ocacnews.net. February 13, 2024. <https://ocacnews.net/article/361972>.

165 Nathaniel Sher and Paul Haenle, “How Pelosi's Taiwan Visit Has Set a New Status Quo for U.S-China Tensions,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 17, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2022/08/how-pelosis-taiwan-visit-has-set-a-new-status-quo-for-us-china-tensions?lang=en>.

166 Image source: Department of European Affairs, MOFA, “MOFA thanks IPAC for passing model resolution on UNGA Resolution 2758 and showing concrete support for Taiwan” July 30, 2024, <https://nspp.mofa.gov.tw/nsppe/news.php?post=256617&unit=370&unitname=governmentnews>.

167 “About” IPAC, accessed March 28, 2025, <https://www.ipac>.

active, the group has grown to include 250 lawmakers from 40 parliaments. In July 2024, IPAC held its first summit in Taiwan—during which two Taiwanese legislators joined the alliance formally.¹⁶⁸ Ahead of the Taipei summit, multiple policymakers reported that Chinese officials asked about their travel plans and were even told not to attend.¹⁶⁹ By comparing the list of attending legislators with IPAC's member countries, a *Domino Theory* article found that representatives from Albania, Belgium, Italy, Kenya, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Switzerland, Uganda, Ukraine and the United States were all absent at the Taipei summit.¹⁷⁰ Considering the close relationship between Taiwan and the United States and the fact that the *TAIPEI Act* calls for the United States to advocate (as appropriate) "for Taiwan's membership in all international organizations in which statehood is not a requirement and in which the United States is also a participant," the absence of US lawmakers is both surprising and disappointing.¹⁷¹

With IPAC's emphasis on upholding democratic norms and holding China accountable, IPAC is an important platform for Taiwan to engage with lawmakers around the world regarding the obstacles that Taiwan faces due to the PRC's weaponization of the One-China Principle and UN Resolution 2758, and to coordinate on how to respond to those challenges. During the Taipei summit, the members of IPAC launched the 2758 Initiative in which members pledged to pass resolutions in their home countries to counter the PRC's distortion of UN Resolu-

global/about.

168 "IPAC Taipei 2024: Taiwan Joins 40-Country Strong Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China," IPAC, July 30, 2024, <https://www.ipac.global/news/ipac-taipei-2024-taiwan-joins>.

169 Dake Kang, "Lawmakers from 6 countries say Beijing is pressuring them not to attend conference in Taiwan," *Associated Press*, <https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-xi-jinping-china-beijing-william-lai-a4dc59a25bce5315f8446587bab0d652>.

170 Joshua Wilkes, "IPAC Taipei 2024: Day One," *Domino Theory*, July 29, 2024, <https://dominotheory.com/ipac-taipei-2024-day-one/>.

171 *Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act*, S. 1678, 116th Cong. (2019-2020).

tion 2758.¹⁷² Now that Taiwan has become a member of IPAC, lawmakers from the United States should use IPAC's platform to engage more deeply with Taiwanese lawmakers and support Taiwan-related initiatives put forward by IPAC—especially last year's 2758 Initiative.

Subnational Diplomacy

Sister City Partnerships

According to Sister Cities International, a sister city partnership is a "broad-based, long-term partnership between two communities in two countries" that is formalized through the signing of an agreement between the highest elected or appointed official from each community.¹⁷³ Currently, Taiwan and the United States have 99 sister partnerships. California, Texas, and Florida have the most sister partnerships with Taiwan, with 13, 10 and 10 respectively.¹⁷⁴ While sister city partnerships are a great way for Taiwan to enhance people-to-people connections at a local level, these partnerships also commonly struggle from a lack of resources and rely too much on the work of individuals—resulting in partnerships becoming stagnant without constant interest and attention.¹⁷⁵ Additionally, local government offices do not always have adequate understanding of the United States' One-China Policy in order to withstand pressure from Beijing. Therefore, to properly maintain these partnerships, it is important for local governments to have personnel and/or offices that are trained on and dedicated to navigating and maintaining international partnerships.

State-Level Diplomacy

172 "IPAC Taipei 2024: Taiwan Joins 40-Country Strong Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China,"

173 "What is a sister city?," Sister Cities International, accessed March 28, 2025, <https://sistercities.org/about-us/what-is-a-sister-city-3/>.

174 "Sister Partnerships by US State," East West Center, accessed March 28, 2025, <https://asiamattersforamerica.org/taiwan/data/sister-partnerships>.

175 NextGenTaiwan, *Facebook*, August 21, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/NextGenTaiwan/videos/403061951239737>.



Image: Former President Tsai Ing-wen met with a delegation led by Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin, welcoming Virginia to establish a trade office in Taiwan.¹⁷⁶

When it comes to state-level partnerships, as of October 2024, a total of 23 US states, as well as Guam, have opened offices in Taiwan.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, 44 resolutions supporting Taiwan have been passed by 37 states and Taiwan has signed 26 education-focused MOUs with US states.¹⁷⁸ Many of these state offices were opened in recent years—the number of US state offices numbered 22 in the 2000s, then dropped to six in 2020, before growing to 23 by 2024.¹⁷⁹ According to the Truman Center, from 2023 to 2024 there have also been 18 outgoing US state delegations to Taiwan.¹⁸⁰

176 Image Source: "President Tsai meets Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin," Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan), April 24, 2023, <https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/6501>.

177 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China (Taiwan), "Foreign Policy Report, 11th Congress of the Legislative Yuan, 2th Session (October 21, 2024)," Press Release, October 21, 2024, <https://www.publicnow.com/view/8355BE42392E217E1E4A15ACEA9B93B04C90F81C>.

178 "Foreign Policy Report, 11th Congress of the Legislative Yuan, 2th Session (October 21, 2024);" "US-TAIWAN EDUCATION INITIATIVE FACTSHEET 2024."

179 Sasha Chhabra, "Indictment Of New York State Official Demonstrates the Need for Taiwan to Conduct Renewed Subnational Diplomacy," *Global Taiwan Brief*, September 18, 2024, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2024/09/indictment-of-new-york-state-official/>.

180 "Multilevel Diplomacy," Truman Center, accessed

There are several reasons for this rapid increase. Most notably, Taiwan has become an attractive place for US investment and businesses due to worsening US-China relations, Taiwan's high-tech industries, and the strengthening of US-Taiwan relations through recent initiatives such as the *US-Taiwan Initiative on 21st Century Trade*.¹⁸¹ While state offices—just like sister city partnerships—also have issues with consistency and fatigue, Taiwan-based offices have credited support from their parent offices for their success. Additionally, Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides subsidies for office rental expenses, in order to reduce the financial burdens of the state offices.¹⁸²

Arts and Cultural Exchanges

Arts and cultural exchanges are another key aspect of US-Taiwan people-to-people ties that can help bring people together and foster cross-cultural understanding. The AIT, TECRO, and partnering civil groups have held a wide range of cultural activities, allowing valuable exchanges between artists from Taiwan and the United States to take place.

In addition to official efforts, civil society has also made great contributions to promoting arts and cultural exchange between the United States and Taiwan. For example, an increasing number of Taiwanese film festivals—or Asia film festivals featuring Taiwan's movies—have taken place in the United States. The largest Taiwan-focused film event in North America, the San Diego Asian Film Festival, has held a Taiwan Film Showcase every year for 13 years and screened 14 Taiwanese movies in its 2024 iteration.¹⁸³

March 28, 2025, <https://www.trumancenter.org/issues/multilevel-diplomacy-map>.

181 Don Shapiro, "The Return of U.S. State Offices," *Taiwan Business Topics*, December 27, 2023, <https://topics.amcham.com.tw/2023/12/the-return-of-u-s-state-offices/>; Office of United States Trade Representative, "U.S.-Taiwan Initiative on 21st-Century Trade," Regulations.gov, June 7, 2022, <https://www.regulations.gov/document/USTR-2022-0005-0001>.

182 Shapiro, "The Return of U.S. State Offices."

183 "About TFFB," Taiwan Film Festival of Boston, <https://taiwanfilmfest.org/about>; Orange County News, "San Diego's first Taiwan Festival promotes cultural exchange between Taiwan and the US," *Worldjournal*, August 10, 2024, <https://www>.

Taiwan Academy: Spotlight Taiwan

Taiwan has also launched a number of cultural exchange initiatives, encouraging people around the world to engage with the unique culture of the island nation. A signature project initiated by the Taiwanese Ministry of Culture in 2013, titled Spotlight Taiwan, aims at building long-term cooperative relationships with art and cultural organizations, universities, and media outlets, and supporting activities that promote Taiwanese culture. There are currently eight organizations partnering with Spotlight Taiwan in the United States—which is the top destination for Spotlight Taiwan programs—including think tanks, like Asia Society, and universities, such as University of California, Berkeley, and University of Southern California.

Arts Professional Exchanges

The Ministry of Culture also collaborated with the Fulbright Taiwan program to launch the Fulbright-Taiwan Ministry of Culture, Arts Professionals Program¹⁸⁴ in 2018. By funding Taiwanese non-artist arts professionals to advance their career in the United States, the program encourages knowledge sharing between the professionals in Taiwan and the United States, covering arts administration, management, technical support, curation, and criticism. Announcing that the program will be renewed until 2027, the program shared that since its 2018 founding it has supported 16 arts professionals to further their careers through exchanges.¹⁸⁵

worldjournal.com/wj/story/121471/8153981; “Taiwanese calligrapher’s works grace The Met in New York,” *Central News Agency*, November 11, 2024, <https://focustaiwan.tw/culture/202411220018>.

184 “Fulbright – Taiwan Ministry of Culture, Arts Professionals Program – Fulbright Taiwan, Foundation for Scholarly Exchange-學術交流基金會,” Fulbright Taiwan, 2022, <https://www.fulbright.org.tw/fulbright-taiwan-ministry-of-culture-arts-professionals-grants/>.

185 “臺美藝文交流人才齊聚一堂 見證文化部與傅爾布莱特聯名獎助計畫續約邁入新篇章,” 文化新聞,新聞與公告, 文化部, August 28, 2024, https://www.moc.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=105&s=223121.



Image: 2024 AIT Soccer Girls Program workshops kick off in Taipei.¹⁸⁶

Sports Diplomacy

Through partnerships with Taiwanese NGOs, AIT has also cooperated on programs that highlight sports diplomacy and shared values of gender equality. In 2023, the Taiwan Sport Forward Association (TSFA), AIT, and the US Global Sports Mentoring Program (GSMP) held a forum in Taipei to discuss sports diplomacy, gender in sports, and sports education.¹⁸⁷ Cooperation between TSFA and AIT also continued in 2024, with a series of workshops that focused on encouraging girls to play soccer.¹⁸⁸

Where there is the most potential for rapid improvements in the people-to-people ties is through civil society initiatives—where these areas most fundamentally reside. Taiwan has emerged as a regional NGO hub due to Taiwan’s robust NGO sector and increasing restrictions within China. More NGOs are shifting to Taiwan because of China’s restrictions: IRI, NDI, Freedom House, European Values Center all have offices in Taiwan. By setting an example, these

186 Image source: “AIT Soccer Girls Program workshops kick off in Taipei,” Taiwan NGO, October 21, 2024, <https://taiwanngo.tw/Post/85086>

187 “Sports Agenda,” Taipei Times, May 6, 2023, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2023/05/06/2003799268>.

188 “2024 AIT 足球女孩計劃【運動培力與足球交流工作坊】,” Taiwan Sport Forward Association, Published May 24, 2025, <https://taiwansfa.org.tw/activity-detail/89/>.

NGOs can hopefully encourage other countries' NGOs to open shop. In addition, Taipei should examine the bureaucratic and logistical obstacles that international NGOs face when establishing a regional office in Taiwan to better facilitate Taiwan's development as a regional NGO hub.

Conclusion

"Taiwan is a model democracy with one of the most innovative economies in the world and a key partner with the United States across multiple fields. Our shared values, deep economic links, and strong people-to-people ties form the bedrock of our friendship and serve as the driving force of US-Taiwan ties."

- AIT Director Raymond Greene¹⁸⁹

The bilateral relationship would not be where it is today if not for the solid foundation of people-to-people ties. Due to limits in official ties between the two nations, people-to-people relations form the bedrock of the US-Taiwan relationship. These ties between the people humanize the enormous stakes and interests involved.

American and Taiwanese officials now regularly tout the strength of the people-to-people ties between the United States and Taiwan.¹⁹⁰ US support for human rights in Taiwan predates the TRA and made it the beacon of democracy that it remains in the eyes of many Taiwanese, and now Taiwan's robust democracy stands as a beacon for many Americans and draws people to it today. Renewing

¹⁸⁹ "Remarks by AIT Director Raymond F. Greene on Security," American Institute in Taiwan, December 20, 2024, <https://www.ait.org.tw/remarks-by-ait-director-greene-on-security-preserving-peace-in-the-indo-pacific/>.

¹⁹⁰ GTI 2024 Annual Symposium: US-Taiwan Relations: An Ironclad Partnership in a Period of Global Disruption | Global Taiwan Institute," Symposium, Global Taiwan Institute, October 29, 2024, <https://globaltaiwan.org/symposium/gti-2024-annual-symposium/>.

that commitment and deepening those shared bonds will ensure that US-Taiwan relations remain strong into the future.

The successes thus far have been driven from the bottom up, there needs to be more top-down mechanisms to reinforce the bottom-up. While there have been notable legislative achievements in authorizing new people-to-people initiatives that help strengthen national security, there is a need for the faithful implementation of these acts. Stronger people-to-people ties can help facilitate more economic interactions and integration of supply chains. There are important language and socio-business cultural differences that more targeted people-to-people initiatives can help the policy goals of the two sides to deepen ties. These issues are increasingly more strategic in nature.

The substance of bilateral relations cannot be measured by its officiality alone. The United States has far more interactions and vested interests in Taiwan than with many other countries with which it maintains official relations. It behooves the two sides to strategically engage in strengthening people-to-people ties in areas that will further deepen the bonds between the two nations.

The substance of bilateral relations cannot be measured by its officiality alone. Both sides must strategically engage in strengthening people-to-people ties in areas that will further deepen the bonds between the two nations.

Policy Recommendations

National Defense & Security

1. Taiwan should increase its defense budget to enable procurement of capabilities necessary to secure its national defense and sustainment needs against a full range of PRC attack and coercion scenarios. The exact amount or percentage of GDP assigned to that task is less important than Taipei demonstrating the will and ability to respond effectively to the complex and evolving PRC threat.
2. The United States must boost its defense industrial base to enable more timely provision of essential military capabilities to Taiwan and help boost the island's own indigenous defense industrial capacity.
3. The United States should enhance its joint operational planning and training with Taiwan to address hard power, coercive and gray zone scenarios in order to ensure both Taiwan's territorial defense and its whole-of-society sustainment and resilience. Taiwan's military and citizenry in turn must invest themselves more seriously in such preparations.
4. The United States should ensure its Asian and European partners understand the practical implications of cross-Strait conflict and PRC coercive activity, and press them to warn China about the stakes to their respective interests of PRC aggression. The United States should also discuss common responses to PRC attack scenarios, from invasion to blockade/quarantine to gray zone attacks, in order to deter such attacks and respond decisively.
5. Taiwanese politicians must avoid making national defense a partisan issue. Likewise in the United States, Taiwan security must remain a bipartisan, whole-of-government, whole-of-society (public-private) endeavor that expedites the provision of defense articles and services required to preserve Taiwan's security, sovereign independence and self-defense capability in all its variety.

Taiwan's International Space

1. The United States should work with likeminded countries to identify opportunities and venues to highlight Taiwan's indispensable value to the world economy as a provider of high-tech products and expertise. In any bilateral and multilateral discussion about Taiwan, it bears repeating that anything that would disrupt access to Taiwan semiconductors would have serious economic consequences. Such a reminder would help motivate countries to offer more substantive support to measures to prevent such disruptions.
2. Congress should be encouraged to pass the *Taiwan International Solidarity Act* that affirms that UN Resolution 2758 does not support the PRC's "One China Principle," and likeminded partners should be encouraged to take similar measures. Although the United States and others have actively pushed back on the PRC's attempts to redefine UN Resolution 2758 as supporting the PRC's "One China Principle," it will require a concerted effort to continue resisting and rejecting this campaign. Official statements from the United States and likeminded countries can be an effective way to communicate such messages—and encourage others to follow suit.
3. US policymakers should identify ways to assist Taiwan's diplomatic partners in resisting PRC pressure to switch recognition, and urge Congress to pass the *Taiwan Allies Fund Act* to provide financial support for these efforts. The United States has previously taken certain measures to support Taiwan's diplomatic partners in pushing back on PRC pressure to switch recognition, but future efforts will require creativity, consistency and resources. Congressionally mandated funding will help make US measures to counter PRC influence operations much more effective.
4. The United States and Taiwan should encourage other countries to join the United States, Taiwan,

Japan, Australia and Canada as official members of the GCTF. The GCTF is one of the most effective platforms for highlighting Taiwan's expertise and expanding Taiwan's international reach. A number of likeminded countries have already supported certain GCTF workshops, and with strong, coordinated effort by existing members, these—and others—could be persuaded to become official members.

5. The United States and likeminded partners should examine creative ways in which Taiwan technical experts could participate in activities of UN technical agencies. Taiwan has much to offer the international community, and were it not blocked from participation, it would undoubtedly be playing an important role in UN technical agencies. To take advantage of this expertise, recruiting Taiwan technical specialists—perhaps as dual citizens—to join delegations to the meetings and activities of these organizations would allow them to share their expertise and also provide Taiwan with at least an indirect channel with these organizations.

Taiwan Economics

1. USTR should be encouraged to further develop the *US-Taiwan 21st Century Trade Initiative* to reach near-FTA levels of economic cooperation. While a bilateral FTA would be the best way to foster closer trade and investment cooperation between the United States and Taiwan, the *US-Taiwan 21st Century Trade Initiative* is a vehicle through which most of the elements of an FTA could be achieved.
2. The United States should urge other key economic partners of Taiwan to formalize their trade and investment ties with Taiwan through bilateral agreements. Many of Taiwan's key trading partners have been historically reluctant to sign economic agreements with Taiwan. With the United States leading the way, other countries could be persuaded that formalizing their economic relationships through bilateral agreements would be prudent and worthwhile. A critical mass of such agreements would provide Taiwan with some of the benefits of the trade blocs from which it is excluded.
3. The United States should send more senior-level economic officials to Taiwan in support of specific measures to strengthen the bilateral economic relationship. Taiwan attaches a great deal of importance to senior-level USG visits, and such visits can be used to accelerate or finalize agreements, investments or other economic objectives.
4. The United States should encourage more Taiwan semiconductor and other high-tech firms to invest in the United States, and also publicly recognize those Taiwan high-tech firms that are already investing in the United States. The major new investments in the United States by TSMC, GlobalWafers and other Taiwan technology firms are enormously important for the future of the relationship and for the US economy. While encouraging more Taiwan high-tech firms to invest in the United States should continue to be a top priority, it will also be important to offer public appreciation for the investments that Taiwan firms have made or announced, thereby acknowledging their valuable contributions and giving them due respect or "face."
5. The United States and Taiwan should encourage and support efforts like the "Startup Island Taiwan Silicon Valley Hub" in order to spur the development of more startups in Taiwan and facilitate their connections to Silicon Valley. Such initiatives can break new ground for stronger US-Taiwan economic and technology cooperation.

People-to-People Ties

1. Taipei should seize on the opportunity created by the notable increases in subnational engagements between the United States and Taiwan in recent years. Despite the growing attention and interest, there is still a lack of capacity at both the state and local levels for deepening commercial and other interactions between the United States and Taiwan. By investing more resources to help facilitate growing people-to-people and commercial interests, Taiwan can help strengthen bilateral relations from the subnational to the national level.
2. In the absence of regular senior-level official contacts, Congressional delegation visits Taiwan are vital demonstrations of US public support for Taiwan. While they are not a substitute for cabinet-level interactions between the executive branches of the two governments, the legislative exchanges serve as an important communication channel between the two governments and help build trust between the two nations through people-to-people exchanges. These and other exchanges should be multilateralized to include other like-minded allies and partners to further push back against China's efforts to isolate Taiwan.
3. Visits by senior officials with the appropriate portfolio for enhancing the people-to-people ties should be regularized. The last visit by the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs in charge of people-to-people diplomacy was in June 2018. A visit by the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs would be a good opportunity to upgrade the people-to-people ties like the formation of a joint committee for public diplomacy.
4. AIT-Washington is a unique institution that can be more effectively utilized to help further the US-Taiwan partnership. Rather than a political screen for government contacts, the institution could also be more effectively employed to deepen American and American businesses' understanding of Taiwan's commercial opportunities and other relevant information.
5. The United States and Taiwan should redouble their efforts to strengthen and expand people-to-people programs like expanding the NGO Fellowship Program to become a permanent, regional NGO center in Taiwan. While the cause is unclear, the delay in the implementation of the *Taiwan Fellowship Act* has left a critical avenue for deepening people-to-people ties underutilized.¹⁹¹ The US Taiwan Fellowship Program and *United States-Taiwan Public Health Protection Act* should be faithfully implemented as soon as practicable.

191 Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Dan Sullivan, Edward J. Markey, James Lankford, Jeffrey A. Merkley, Jerry Moran, John Cornyn, Joni K. Ernst, Marco Rubio, and Ron Wyden to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, May 15, 2024, https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/taiwan_fellowship_oversight_letter_51524.pdf.

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