

Taiwan's Green Port Diplomacy: Wind, Shore Power, and Pacific Engagement**Mohammed Afsal K H****Brewing Soft Power: How Taiwan's Bubble Tea is Building Bridges Across Africa****Francis Annagu****Are the West Philippine Sea and the Luzon-Straits Frontiers any Different?****Joshua Bernard B. Espeña****The Prince Group, Symbol of a Crisis****Benjamin Sando****Building an NGO Hub in Taiwan: Enhancing Regional Collaboration****Robert Wang****Taiwan's Green Port Diplomacy: Wind, Shore Power, and Pacific Engagement****By: Mohammed Afsal K H**

Mohammed Afsal K H is a PhD Scholar in International Relations at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras.

Taiwan's latest diplomatic push in the Pacific has come with developments in maritime infrastructure. Between 2024 and 2025, Taiwan pushed the number of [high-voltage shore power systems](#) at its ports to 11, relaunched a [solar-powered research yacht](#) for Palau, and helped finance [Tuvalu's first international submarine internet cable](#). These initiatives underscore a deliberate strategy: Taipei is leveraging green-technology projects and sustainable infrastructure as diplomatic levers. By exporting port-based renewables and connectivity, Taiwan hopes to cement ties with allied nations—at a time when climate change and economic development are urgent challenges among the Pacific island states.

Taiwan's Domestic Green-Port Capacities

Taiwan has been building up its own ports as green-energy hubs. The state-run [Taiwan International Ports Corporation](#) (TIPC, 台灣港務股份有限公司) launched a Green Port Incentive Program to reward “clean vessels” and [shore power usage](#). Under this program, ships berthing at Taiwan's commercial ports are encouraged to plug into shore power instead of running diesel generators. By the end of 2024, 11 high-voltage shore-power systems were operational across TIPC ports—a tangible metric of Taiwan's domestic readiness. Such systems can slash at-berth ship emissions by up to 98 percent, according to the [US Environmental Protection Agency](#).

Concurrently, Taiwan is repurposing the [Anping Port](#) in Tainan for its offshore wind industry. Under Taipei's net-zero plan, four wharves at Anping Port (wharves number 10, 11, 17 and 18) have been leased to offshore wind companies for storing and handling turbine components. Wharves 10 and 11, for example, were upgraded to handle heavy blades and towers. All four wharves are now engaged in the wind sector—a project that helped Anping Port's cargo volume jump [556 percent](#) in early 2024 as wind shipments poured in. Anping Port is even home to Taiwan's new domestic wind-turbine installation vessel, the [Green Jade](#). These moves mean that Taiwan's ports not only reduce emissions (via shore power) but also serve as bases for the clean-energy industry. TIPC also reported that it had

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

Editor-in-Chief
John Dotson

Staff Editor
Benjamin Sando

The views and opinions expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Global Taiwan Institute.

To view web sources cited in the published papers (underlined in printed text), visit <https://globaltaiwan.org/issues/vol-10-issue-22/>.

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

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

leased nearly [463 hectares of port land](#) to green-energy firms by 2024, and had saved roughly 1,116 metric tons in CO₂ emissions annually through its own solar installations (in addition to 56,000 tons saved for port tenants). These figures underscore the scale of TIPC's renewable commitments.

Case 1: Palau – Solar Power, Eco-Tourism, and Green Shipping

Taiwan's eco-diplomacy in Palau has focused on renewable energy and green transport. In September 2024, the [TaiwanICDF](#) (the nation's development fund) completed a solar photovoltaic system at Palau's National Aquaculture Center. At the inauguration, Taiwanese experts [demonstrated](#) the panels to 30 Palauan students and teachers, instructing them in how renewables can power aquaculture and cut carbon emissions. This hands-on training reflects Taiwan's emphasis on capacity building, in which youth are explicitly involved in green tech and climate education.

Building on this, Taiwan and Palau [signed a memorandum of understanding](#) in February 2025 to introduce colored solar panels that double as advertising displays. The first such panel—a photovoltaic unit coated with a decorative layer—was slated for installation by the third quarter of 2025. Palauan officials note these panels will both generate power and showcase cultural images or advertisements, blending sustainability with tourism appeal. Taiwan's energy official praised the move as a “new chapter of energy transformation” in Palau, highlighting bilateral friendship and innovation.

Taiwan has also innovated in green shipping for Palau's tourism. In May 2025, Kaohsiung officials relaunched the [Porrima P111](#), a zero-emissions yacht powered by wind, solar, and hydrogen energy. Acer founder Stan Shih (施振榮), who is now a [senior economic advisor](#) to Palau, [said](#) the zero-emissions yacht will soon ferry high-end tourists in Palauan waters. Palau's president and Taiwan dignitaries attended the launch, signaling that this project is part of Taiwan's [Diplomatic Allies Prosperity Project](#) to boost the economies of partner nations. The *Porrima P111* thus serves dual purposes: it exemplifies Taiwanese tech prowess and provides eco-tourism infrastructure for Palau.

Beyond these projects, Taiwan has offered financial backing for Palau's climate resilience. In February 2023, Taipei disbursed a [USD 1 million grant](#) to fund Palau's “Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Project.” This grant, drawn from Taiwan's “Adaptation and Contingency Fund for Climate Change,” financed seawalls, rainwater tanks and firefighting equipment

in vulnerable communities. Palauan officials publicly praised Taiwan's quick support as a model for regional cooperation. In March 2025, Palau's president [thanked Taiwan for its continued partnership](#) on clean energy and sustainable development, reflecting how these green initiatives translate into diplomatic goodwill.



Image: Palau President Surangel S. Whipps, Jr. (second from right), ROC Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung (right), and other Taiwanese officials at the launch ceremony in Tainan for the *Porrima P111* green energy ship donated to Palau (May 22, 2025). (Image source: [President of Palau Facebook Page](#))

Case 2: Tuvalu – Connectivity, Clean Energy, and Climate Resilience

Taiwanese green diplomacy in Tuvalu has a digital and climate focus. A major breakthrough was [Tuvalu's Vaka submarine cable](#), launched in October 2023. This USD 56 million international subsea cable—backed by Australia, Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan and the United States (with [Google serving as a technical partner](#))—is Tuvalu's first direct global internet link. By connecting Funafuti to high-speed fiber, the Vaka cable promises faster, cheaper internet across all islands—thereby boosting education, healthcare and commerce. Tuvalu's communications minister [celebrated](#) the cable as more than just infrastructure, stating that it lays “the foundation for our transformation into a digital nation.” Taiwan's role in this project highlights how it leverages international partnerships (here, with like-minded donors) to provide tangible benefits to a diplomatic ally.

On the climate front, Taiwan co-led a [Global Cooperation and Training Framework \(GCTF\) climate workshop](#) in Tuvalu in August 2024. Hosted by Taiwan's embassy and the Tuvalu government (in collaboration with the United States, Australia and Japan), the “Building Climate Change Resilience” workshop drew around 60 participants—including government officials, scholars,

and NGO representatives from Tuvalu and regional neighbors. Sessions focused on adaptation strategies for small islands, and delegates toured key sites. Destinations included the ongoing [Tuvalu Coastal Adaptation Project \(TCAP\)](#)—a UN-backed initiative to raise islands and protect coasts—and a new [floating solar power installation](#). Taiwan’s experts and visiting officials saw firsthand how solar farms and improved infrastructure address Tuvalu’s flood and power challenges. This hands-on exchange under the GCTF underscores Taiwan’s approach of linking its technical expertise with local projects.

In terms of funding and policy, Taiwan has also begun to tie down longer-term support for Tuvalu’s climate needs. Taiwan is a partner in the TCAP and works closely with Tuvalu on coastal protection. Moreover, at the first Pacific Climate Change Forum in Taipei in July 2023, Taiwan announced plans to establish a [Just Transition Fund](#) with its Pacific allies—explicitly including Tuvalu—to finance climate adaptation in island nations. This gesture follows Taiwan’s prior adaptation funding (e.g. the Palau grant) and signals Taipei’s intent to contribute to multilateral climate solutions for its friends.

In short, Taiwan’s engagement with Tuvalu spans infrastructure, renewable power, and governance, all tailored to Tuvalu’s unique vulnerabilities. Such cooperation aligns with Tuvalu’s partnership frameworks like the [Australia–Tuvalu Falepili Union](#), which also emphasize collective climate action.



Image: Participants in the August 15–16, 2024 “Building Climate Change Resilience in Small Island States” workshop in Funafuti, Tuvalu, co-sponsored by Taiwan’s embassy and convened under the Global Cooperation and Training (GCTF) Framework. (Image source: [GCTF](#))

China’s Pacific Strategy: Scale and Contrast

For context, China’s role in the Pacific is characterized

by projects and funding instruments far larger in scale. According to [Lowy Institute data analyzed by Deng-hua Zhang](#), China invested around USD 1.05 billion in Pacific Island countries between 2011–2016—nearly four times Taiwan’s aid volume of USD 271 million during the same period. Beijing typically channels funds through state loans and [Belt and Road Initiative](#) deals, financing [mega-infrastructure](#) (highways, ports, [stadiums](#)) and [extractive ventures](#). In one expensive project, China funded a [USD 46 million university dormitory in Papua New Guinea](#). China’s influence often comes via large construction contracts and trade ties. Meanwhile, Taiwan seeks to win favor through expertise and grants.

Importantly, Palau and Tuvalu are not part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Unlike some neighbors that received Chinese-built [bridges](#) or [hydropower dams](#), these diplomatic allies of Taiwan have largely avoided Chinese mega-projects. Taiwan has sought to fill the void. Even so, the disparity in scale is stark. Chinese funders can offer hundreds of millions of dollars per project, whereas Taiwan’s annual aid to the Pacific historically averages in the tens of millions (though it dipped to USD 7.2 million in 2022), according to the [Lowy Institute Pacific Aid Map](#). Taiwan does not pretend to compete on raw spending. Instead, it emphasizes normative leadership on issues like climate and health. In policy terms, this means Taiwan should measure its success by different yardsticks: not how many miles of highway it builds, but by how many tons of carbon emissions it averts or the number of lives it protects.

Impact and Lessons for Policy

Even though data points are still emerging, the effectiveness of Taiwan’s green-port diplomacy can be gauged by concrete outputs and outcomes. Domestically, Taiwan can cite precise metrics, such as “11 shore-power berths installed by 2024,” plus hundreds of megawatts of offshore-wind capacity planned around its ports under the [Ministry of Economic Affairs’ \(經濟部\) national targets](#). TIPC also tracks land leased to renewables projects (462.7 hectares by 2024) and CO₂ reductions from solar (over 57,000 tons of CO₂ saved by all PV projects). These numbers demonstrate Taiwan’s own green transition, a credibility that it can then project abroad. In Palau and Tuvalu, metrics might include the number of solar systems deployed, local technicians trained, or emissions avoided. For instance, the Palau aquaculture solar array directly reduces diesel use on the island, and the 30 students trained there is a small-scale but measurable outcome. Taiwan Interna-

tional Windpower Training Co. Ltd. (TIWTC, 台灣風能訓練股份有限公司), a Taichung-based training provider in renewables development, has issued around 3,900 offshore wind certificates ([TIPC 2024](#))—and with [AmCham Taiwan](#) reporting that around 30 percent of trainees are foreign workers, the center is effectively building a regional talent pool.

These outputs translate into soft-power gains. In Palau, government statements have praised Taiwan’s “invaluable support” in clean energy. Each completed solar project or eco-yacht launch has a positive effect on Taiwan’s image. But Taiwan must guard against viewing projects as ends in and of themselves. To make these projects truly effective soft power tools, Taiwan should monitor usage and benefits, such as how much port pollution is cut by shore power or how internet speeds changed after the installation of the undersea cable in Tuvalu. For example, TIPC could report the annual tonnage of emissions avoided by its 11 shore-power systems. It could tabulate how many Tuvaluan households use solar, or how many Palauans ride new electric buses. These metrics can be cited in diplomatic reports and media to reinforce Taiwan’s regional contributions.

At the same time, Taiwan must be candid about its limitations. Its funding for Palau and Tuvalu is still in the low millions of USD, which restricts scale. It cannot out-compete China on flashy infrastructure or loans. Moreover, Taiwan’s exclusion from bodies like the United Nations or [Green Climate Fund](#) means it needs creative workarounds. Hence, frameworks such as GCTF workshops are critical for Taiwan’s diplomacy. The value of Taiwan’s approach lies in niche diplomacy. Taiwan has positioned itself to promote responsible norms in foreign aid, introducing cutting-edge green technology and standards in fora where it has a seat. In practice, this means continuing to seek partnerships (as with the Vaka cable consortium) and co-funding (through TaiwanICDF and allied donors) for each project.

The main point: Taiwan is leveraging its domestic green-port expertise to support allies Palau and Tuvalu in renewable energy and connectivity. While Taiwan’s dollar contributions are dwarfed by China’s infrastructure loans, these eco-technology projects and training programs allow Taiwan to deliver practical benefits and win goodwill in niches where it has a comparative edge. By measuring impacts, Taiwan can make a tangible positive impact for its Pacific friends.

Brewing Soft Power: How Taiwan’s Bubble Tea is Building Bridges Across Africa

By: Francis Annagu

Francis Annagu is a freelance journalist and researcher. He earned his bachelor’s degree in political science from Kaduna State University. He has been a fellow of Tiger Eye Foundation and Code for Africa/Global Forest Watch, and a grantee of Pulitzer Center, Rainforest Journalism Fund, and Africa-China Reporting Project. He has collaborated on research with international teams at the Curatorial Research LAB (South Korea) and curated a botany project with Co.iki (Japan). He is currently a Dataphyte Fellow and researcher for the Eric Hosking Charitable Trust.

When young people at the very center of Nigeria’s commercial hub, Lagos, snap photos of pastel-layered milk tea for Instagram, they are partaking in a global trend that originated in Taiwan four decades ago. Indeed, bubble tea studded with chewy tapioca pearls (珍珠奶茶) is more than just a fashionable drink. Far from it, the beverage has evolved into one of Taiwan’s most visible cultural exports, symbolizing how local innovation can achieve global influence. Over the years since its creation in 1986 at the [Chun Shui Tang Teahouse](#) (春水堂人文茶館) by Lin Hsiu Hui (林秀慧), bubble tea has become a packaged cultural export with growing supply chains, brand networks, and training seminars—all measured by hard economic data. Today, as boba cafés open in Nairobi, Lagos and Johannesburg, Taiwan’s food culture footprint is gradually expanding across the tapestries of Africa—demonstrating Taiwan’s capacity for soft power, particularly among Gen Z youth.

This analysis examines how bubble tea—also known as “[boba in the United States](#)”—has grown from a Taiwanese culinary product into a global industry, now taking firm root some 6,200 miles away in Africa. This expansion highlights Taiwan’s strategic use of cultural entrepreneurship as a diplomatic tool. Given recent economic data on the global market potential for the drink, bubble tea’s role in Taiwan’s broader cultural diplomacy deserves prudent consideration.

A Taiwanese Invention Becomes Global

Bubble tea has [evolved](#) into a global beverage catalogue that now supports various ingredient exporters, machine manufacturers, and franchise networks. Its expansion has brought about success for many [Taiwanese firms](#) selling vital inputs used in the production of the tea: such as tapioca pearls, flavored powders, syrups and brewing machines. In turn, Taiwanese trade

and product exhibitions have actively been promoting the [exports](#) of these goods. Profoundly, Taiwan's cultural identity is tied to the drink. Local coverage has termed this industry the "[bubble economy](#)," illustrating how export has become a feature of Taiwan's national identity.



Image: Bubble Tea stand in a shopping center in Tomaszów Mazowiecki, Poland. (Image source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

The global bubble tea industry is measurable. The table below illustrates the current state and projected growth of the bubble tea market in Africa, Taiwan, and across the world.

Market Snapshot

Region (Year)	Source	Market Size
Middle East and Africa (MEA, 2022)	Grand View Research [1]	USD 130 million, projected to reach USD 243 million by 2030
South Africa (2024)	Deep Market Insights [2]	USD 29.31 million, heading toward USD 58.81 million by 2033
Africa (2025)	Mobility Forecasts [3]	USD 190 million, expected to hit USD 630 million by 2031
Taiwan (2024)	Taiwan Today [4]	USD 4 billion

Table: Compiled by the author. Sources: Compiled from [1]–[4] listed in References below.

Taiwan's Supply Advantage

The authenticity of the drink is not incidental. Taiwanese middlemen [supply the crucial ingredients](#) used in making bubble tea, such tapioca pearls, powdered bases, and specialized cooking equipment that are crucial for replicating the "[QQ](#)" texture and original taste

that consumers expect. To that end, trade exhibitions in Taiwan, including events supported by [Taiwan External Trade Development Council](#) (TAITRA, 外貿協會) have helped standardize supply and promote exports of ingredients and machinery. Export figures and [news reports](#) indicate substantial revenue in the export of tapioca pearls and related equipment, further supporting the outlook that Taiwan is the industrial home of bubble tea inputs around the world.

In addition to goods needed for bubble tea production, Taiwan's firms are also [providing services](#) such as franchise training, recipe sharing, and equipment maintenance. In such a way, Taiwan's bubble tea companies are verging on becoming *de facto* cultural ambassadors.

Local Adaptation and Entrepreneurial Creativity

Where Taiwanese ingredients arrive, African entrepreneurs are adapting to local market demands. In the city of Lagos, vendors like [TeaStoria](#) and [Bubbleti](#) advertise boba as a premium leisure experience. Meanwhile, in Nairobi, emerging local brands like [TAO BOBA](#) style themselves as "authentic vendors" while tweaking sugar levels and mixing in local flavors. Several Nigerian startups even [produce tapioca pearls](#) domestically, indicating an early-stage localization of the supply chain for sustainability. [Instagram accounts](#), local listings, and nascent local manufacturers show initial reliance on imported ingredients followed by a gradual shift to local production as capacity grows and customers expand.

Because imported pearls and powders can be expensive based on exchange rates and shipping costs, localization is key for the durability of the African bubble tea market. In the longer term, this adjustment appears as a form of co-creation that anchors Taiwanese products within African culture, making soft power look more sustainable than state-led diplomacy alone.

Soft Power in a Cup

Why should policymakers care about the global demand for bubble tea? In simple terms, cultural exports like bubble tea build recognition and familiarity—two intangible assets that friends of Taiwan [argue are critical](#) in a diplomatic environment [constrained](#) by the People's Republic of China. For Taiwan, whose [formal diplomatic network](#) is slim in the region, these unofficial ties have real [strategic value](#). Bubble tea's relevance lies in its capacity to create narratives that present Taiwan as innovative, youthful, and modern.

Unlike many other soft power pursuits, commercial

logic supports this diplomatic payoff. As the [Middle East and Africa](#) markets continue to grow, Taiwanese suppliers and franchise networks may look closer at deepening trade links, creating training exchanges, and [cooperating](#) on culinary tourism. Put together, economic and cultural cooperation can amplify Taiwan's political visibility without requiring any formal recognition from national capitals.



Image: Bubble tea served by Chun Shui Tang Teahouse, the purported creator of the drink. (Image source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

In summary, bubble tea demonstrates how cultural industries can complement official diplomacy by creating bottom-up relationships that give Taiwan an indispensable global image and strengthen its soft power reach, especially in a difficult sphere of African politics.

Policy and Industry Recommendations

Some policy recommendations are necessary for Taiwan's policymakers and bubble tea exporters to strengthen their relationships with African firms and consumers:

1. Expand ongoing trade promotion missions and TAI-

TRA partnerships focused specifically on African retailers and importers.

2. Run franchise and barista training for African partners to ensure product quality and brand consistency.
3. Commission independent studies capable of tracking cultural penetration, and any correlation with business ties or student exchanges between Taiwan and Africa.

At the same time, some practical recommendations can guide African entrepreneurs as well as policymakers in the industry:

1. Entrepreneurs should invest in small food-processing capacities for pearls and syrups to capture domestic value and interest in Taiwan products.
2. Policymakers should arrange partnerships with Taiwanese suppliers to provide training and quality control for bubble tea entrepreneurs, and plan incubator programs to help startups scale up their ideas.

Conclusions

The popularity of bubble tea in Africa is not a geopolitical panacea to its diplomatic challenges. Viewed this way, consumer demand will not affect diplomatic recognition overnight. But it is an instructive example of how cultural entrepreneurship can advertise Taiwanese identity, as well as inject industry know-how into an everyday space where young Africans gather, drink and socialize. As African markets expand, the commercial growth of bubble tea will likely open new paths for stronger Taiwan-Africa people-to-people ties. Ultimately, the challenge Taiwan faces is not to overstate the symbolism but to harness it fully.

In the crowded shop of global diplomacy, a cup of bubble tea is a modest expense for a potential [cultural footing](#). For Taipei, whose options for influence are limited or practically invisible, such opportunities are strategically advantageous. That said, the challenges it faces are straightforward: scaling supply chains, localizing production where possible, and measuring [diplomatic returns](#) so that policy support gathers momentum. If Taipei solves these growing pains, the next wave of African youth may grow up with a Taiwanese thread woven through their urban lives—one chewy pearl at a time.

The main point: Taiwan's globally beloved bubble tea has become an emerging bridge of soft power between Taiwan and Africa's fast-growing urban popula-

tions. Fueled by local entrepreneurship and Taiwanese supply chains, a sweeping form of Taiwanese cultural diplomacy is taking shape in African cities. Through tapioca pearls, café culture, and digital aesthetics, Taiwan is extending its global influence beyond just formal diplomacy.

[1] Grand View Research. “Middle East and Africa Bubble Tea Market Size and Outlook, 2030.” Horizon Databook. Accessed October 12, 2025. <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/horizon/outlook/bubble-tea-market/mea>.

[2] Deep Market Insights, “South Africa Bubble Tea Market Size & Outlook, 2025–2033.” Accessed December 12, 2025, <https://deepmarketinsights.com/vista/insights/bubble-tea-market/south-africa>.

[3] Mobility Foresights Pvt Ltd. Africa Bubble Tea Market Size and Forecasts 2031. Last updated August 6, 2025. <https://mobilityforesights.com/product/africa-bubble-tea-market>.

[4] Taiwan Today, “Bubble Economy,” February 6, 2025, accessed December 12, 2025, <https://www.taiwantoday.tw/Culture/Taiwan-Review/265324/Bubble-Economy>.

Are the West Philippine Sea and the Luzon-Straits Frontiers any Different?

By: Joshua Bernard B. Espeña

Joshua Bernard B. Espeña, MIS is a lecturer at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines, a Ph.D. student in Political Science at the University of the Philippines, Vice President of the International Development and Security Cooperation (IDSC), and a Young Leader at the Pacific Forum.

Introduction

Seeing the neighborhood toughen up for the worst, the Philippines has made huge leaps to secure its strategic interests. Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., Manila has set its house in order to realize those interests. Manila’s security policy evolution requires consolidation of its archipelagic and maritime geography to uphold its sovereignty and to demonstrate agency in the region.

The Philippines has made notable efforts in the West Philippine Sea (WPS)—its [claimed portion](#) in the South China Sea (SCS)—to offset the People’s Republic of China (PRC)’s maritime expansion, with initiatives such as the [Transparency Initiative](#) and [Multilateral Maritime](#)

[Cooperative Activity](#). Meanwhile, there is another frontier that deserves equal attention—the Luzon Strait, which is neatly adjacent to the Taiwan Strait. Some view the WPS and the Luzon Strait as distinct frontiers and would therefore [advise a policy of restraint](#) against entanglement with cross-Strait issues. Nonetheless, the Philippines has its own strategic logic for taking action.

This article intends to unpack this strategic logic and how it will shape the decisions of all stakeholders. It argues that Manila sees the WPS and Luzon-Taiwan straits as interlinked frontiers, and that the world should view this quiet development as the unfolding of a “New Cross-Strait Security Complex.” It may not necessarily result in the Philippines abandoning its One-China Policy—nor is it calling everybody to “abandon ship” in doubling down efforts to the WPS—but stakeholders can no longer ignore this emerging dynamic and must recalibrate their approach.

The Strategic Logic

In a separate *Global Taiwan Brief* article from 2023, this author [contended](#) that Manila’s [National Security Policy 2023-2028](#) (NSP) demonstrates Manila’s evolving strategic calculus toward Taipei, potentially opening a window of opportunity for expanded Philippine-Taiwan ties. Since 2023, we have observed a rather mixed picture of saber-rattling by Beijing—[warning](#) Manila “not to play with fire” in what it views as meddling in Chinese domestic issues—and political signaling by Taipei, which [hinted](#) that regional players like Manila could leverage the island-nation’s New Southbound Policy for economic gains despite limited formal relations.

Even without personally meeting each other, Philippine and Taiwanese leaders have recently been exchanging good graces. For instance, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. [congratulated](#) President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) on X (formerly Twitter) on his electoral victory as the island-nation’s president in January 2024. In just April this year, President Marcos Jr. [eased](#) long-standing [restrictions on Philippine officials](#)—except for the president, vice president, and secretaries of defense and foreign affairs—that prevented them from visiting Taiwan to expand bilateral trade and investment. In August, the Philippine President [expressed concerns](#) that the Philippines’ geographic proximity to the Taiwan Strait would require his country to become involved in a conflict between Beijing and Taipei. Perhaps for this reason, Taiwan’s Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴) [told](#) the press on the sidelines of an international forum in November this year that Taiwan and the Phil-

ippines must strengthen cooperation—to tackle not only economic issues, but also security challenges that beset the region. As one Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨) legislator has [said](#), the two nations have “started to smile at each other.”

While the Philippines and Taiwan maintain an existing [coast guard cooperation agreement](#) that followed a deadly [maritime crisis](#) back in 2013, a *Japan Times* [report](#) recently uncovered that Manila is quietly deepening its defense ties with Taipei. Although details remain unclear, the media has already picked up signals, such as Taiwan’s informal participation in the Philippine-hosted Balikatan Exercises’ [International Observer Program](#) (featuring 19 nations total). A *Taipei Times* article [reported](#) that Taiwanese military observers joined the Kamandag Exercises, a drill for Philippine, American, and Japanese marines held in Batanes this year.

For what its worth, the Philippine NSP [states](#) that Manila cares about the cross-strait relations between Taiwan and PRC—a consequence of its interlinked concerns on trade, remittance, protection of overseas Filipinos, and the potential influx of humanitarian refugees from the island-nation. Some may dismiss such concerns as merely reactive, but the document offers a national security vision of “a free, resilient, peaceful, and prosperous archipelagic and maritime nation, at peace with itself and its neighbors, enabled by reliable defense and public safety systems.”

So far, the operational grammar to express this strategic logic has been to repeatedly wargame a Taiwan contingency. In its 40th iteration of the Balikatan Exercise this year, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), with its American, Australian, and Japanese counterparts, [rehearsed](#) several combined arms functions—most notably, a drill in the islands of Batanes (Manila’s northernmost province near Taiwan). Thanks to the [expansion of agreed-upon locations](#) in Northern Luzon through which American faces can rotate—following a renegotiation of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement in early 2023—basing, logistics, joint fires, and command-and-control, among others, are becoming much less of a problem for the AFP and its likeminded counterparts.

Public sources indicate that Manila guides its strategic community to enact the country’s defense logic through the [Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense Concept](#) (CADC). Militarily, the AFP translates CADC’s operational grammar through the Comprehensive Archipelagic Defense Operations ([CADO](#)), by providing

force management to the AFP Northern Luzon Command (NOLCOM)—the unified command in charge of defending the areas proximate to Taiwan. Here, Manila fixes its gaze at Mavulis Island, the northernmost island in Batanes, which practically stands at the Luzon-Taiwan Straits frontier. As the lone AFP NOLCOM outpost, Mavulis Island has become a [lightning rod for security discourse](#) on the mixed picture of symbolism and substance.

On the American side, US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth [informed](#) the public before a March 2025 joint conference with Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro about an planned bilateral special force training operation in Batanes. While this announcement signals a silent nod from the Philippine side, the AFP leadership is also contemplating how the AFP NOLCOM and Western Command (WESCOM)—one that is in charge of defending the Kalayaan (Spratly) Islands and maritime features in the WPS—can learn, plan, and operate with each other in an event of a full-scale war, where they would expect the PRC to prove a serious foe.

A New Cross-Strait Security Complex?

Hard times call for recognizing the emergence of the New Cross-Strait Security Complex, a subregional security complex emerging in this important part of the Indo-Pacific region. While some might view this merely as an academic term, increasing institutional, material, and cognitive patterns of interaction are already in place. [1]

Several wargames conducted by think tanks, like the [Center for Strategic and International Studies](#) and the [Center for New American Security](#), highlight that Manila is no longer merely a bystander in regional security. It is now asserting the Philippines’ agency through its status as a local actor to burnish its legitimacy in carving out a distinctive pattern of interaction affecting national and regional security.

The world must notice this pattern of WPS and Luzon-Taiwan Straits interlinkage not because of the Philippines’ narrow national interests, but because of what Manila’s modest efforts contribute to an emergent subregional security complex.

The New Cross-Strait Security Complex does not imply interference into PRC and Taiwan’s respective domestic affairs. For instance, the Philippines understands this sensitivity and would not risk its people’s safety and throw away economic benefits in favor of excessive friction with the PRC. It must be said that the Philippines’ regional motives are [modest, if not compla-](#)

[cent](#)—as compared to PRC’s goals to [foster](#) a defensive seawall in the First Island Chain that involves Taiwan as its underbelly. Yet, this same regional interdependence with Beijing and Taipei prompts Manila to carve new ways of thinking about and seeing its neighborhood.

With all this in mind, it must be said that Manila lacks resource capacity, and it is constrained in its policy autonomy to navigate the new security complex. At the institutional level, pressures from the opposition remain—such as when President Marcos Jr.’s sister, Senator Imee Marcos, who then chaired the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, [pressed](#) Foreign Affairs Secretary Maria Theresa Lizaro in August this year to clarify President Marcos’ statement on the Taiwan contingency. Secretary Lizaro [hurriedly reiterated](#) the One-China Policy. Senator Erwin Tulfo [disagreed](#), remarking that respecting the One-China Policy does not translate into a solution for the PRC’s actions in the WPS. Secretary Lizaro rebutted by deferring to existing [de-escalatory mechanisms](#) with Beijing.

At the societal level, recent public opinion polls [show](#) that most Filipinos are in strong support of the Philippine government’s efforts in the WPS. However, there is yet to be solid evidence regarding public approval for Manila’s Taiwan contingency activities. In fact, the public responded with a mixture of uproar and anxiety when the AFP announced that it was training to “fight on its own” for up to [30 days](#) if a conflict occurs. Pundits [remark](#) that holding the line until relief comes from the US and allied forces will be a challenge for maintaining trust, yet even so, the same polls [show](#) high support for Manila to cooperate with America and other counterparts.

So, while societal and institutional challenges are present, the Philippines continues to muddle through and sometimes create opportunities that make subregional security complexes emergent.

Conclusion

This article is in no way prescribing immediate fixes to the PRC’s revisionist behavior. As regional players [convene](#) to consider fostering a “one-theater” concept against the PRC, the emergent New Cross-Strait Security Complex warrants attention for those who care about the regional commons. Practically, modest cognitive changes must take place, such as recognizing the role of the Philippines not only in the WPS, but also in the Luzon-Taiwan Strait frontier—not so that Manila can be dragged into a conflict, but so that it can co-create opportunities along defense, economic, and devel-

opmental lines.

The [Luzon Economic Corridor](#) is one of the great starting points, but stakeholders must pitch more intensified and inclusive models to scaffold the New Cross-Strait Security Complex into a formal regional hub. Informal talks over [smart harbors](#) between Manila and Taipei within the said corridor are also a welcome development to provide nuance beyond the domineering [microchip discourse](#). Wargaming centers can initiate this cognitive shift from the bottom up, which should ripple into Track 1.5/2 dialogues. Ultimately, the Philippines’ strategic logic reminds us that collective deterrence works alongside diplomacy and development—especially across the New Cross-Strait Security Complex that it now shares quietly with Taiwan.

The main point: External observers often view the West Philippine Sea and Luzon-Taiwan Straits as distinct strategic areas and may well advise Manila to keep to that thinking. From the Philippine perspective, however, these frontiers are interlinked and are testing the country’s capacity. The world must grasp this strategic logic and the emergence of a “New Cross-Strait Security Complex”—which is germane not only to Taiwan’s future, but also the fate of the regional commons.

[1] The author conceptualized the “New cross-Strait Security Complex” based on Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver’s Regional Security Complex and Leonardo Bandarra’s Hierarchy Complexes of (re)ordering the periphery—particularly the material, institutional, and cognitive structures that underpin the interaction of actors. See Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Leonardo Bandarra, “(Re-)Ordering from the Periphery: Hierarchy Complexes and Agency in the Global Nuclear Order,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2025.2461630>.

The Prince Group, Symbol of a Crisis

By: Annabel Simpson

Annabel has recently finished her Masters in Taiwan Studies at SOAS, University of London, and is now a student at National Sun Yat Sen University’s Chinese Language Centre.

Introduction

In early October this year, Netflix released *The Resur-*

rected (回魂計), a Taiwanese thriller set against the backdrop of [Southeast Asian scam compounds](#). Since its release, the drama—which follows the story of two mothers whose desperation leads them to seek to resurrect their daughters’ trafficker to make them pay further for their misdeeds—[has already captivated viewers both in Taiwan and abroad](#).

Coincidentally, the topic of these scam compounds re-entered the global news cycle less than a week after the drama’s release. On October 13, the *Korea Herald* published a scathing editorial on the South Korean government’s response to the scam center crisis: stating that [“Seoul’s task is not only to repatriate the dead, but to protect the living,”](#) and insinuating that Korean authorities have so far failed in their responsibility to protect citizens. The associated uproar led to the [mass repatriation of Korean nationals in Cambodia](#) and reignited the debate as to whether or not those found in the compounds should be treated as victims or scammers.

Most recently however, it has been a Cambodian conglomerate called the [Prince Group](#) that has dominated headlines. Both the United States and the United Kingdom have recently [imposed sanctions](#) on the company and some of its executives on the basis of their involvement in the scam outfits.

Prince Group and its relationship to the compounds

In 2022, [reports and testimonies](#) on so-called scam compounds in Southeast Asia began making their way into international headlines. These compounds have since garnered a reputation for their brutality and violence, with workers often forced to [work long hours running online scams](#) under the threat of physical violence—regardless of whether they were trafficked into the compound or arrived willingly. Despite the various waves of media coverage this issue has received, these compounds are growing in number and have now [spread beyond Southeast Asia](#). Similar compounds have been found, for example, in Africa and South America. As the industry expands, so does its reliance on human trafficking. Victims belonging to [over 70 different nationalities](#) have now been reported.

Among these victims are Taiwanese nationals. Due to the [lack of international recognition of Taiwan](#), these victims face additional obstacles in trying to get home. Not only does this lack of recognition [have an impact](#) on how Taiwanese authorities are able to assist their victims, it also imposes a psychological effect on victims themselves—who may decide against going to the local authorities for assistance because of their

perceived inability to support Taiwanese citizens. This situation is not aided by confusion within the Taiwanese government as to who is responsible for helping these victims—with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 外交部) and National Police Agency (NPA, 警政署) both claiming that [the other agency is responsible](#).

Clear from onset of this crisis, however, is the involvement of the Prince Group and its founder Chen Zhi (陈志). Since 2022, a number of media reports have connected the Prince Group to the scam compounds in Cambodia through other companies under the conglomerate’s umbrella, such as [the Cambodian Heng Xin Estate Company](#) and the [Jin Bei Group](#). Just this year, [NGOs, journalists, and think tanks](#) have all warned of Prince Group’s involvement not just in Cambodia—but also further afield, in Palau.

This is not the first time the Prince Group has found itself in hot water. [People’s Republic of China \(PRC\) law enforcement reportedly set up a task force](#) in 2020 to investigate the source of the group’s funds. But China has also [accused](#) the United States of stealing bitcoin from Chen in 2020. In a [2024 interview with the Australian Broadcasting Company](#), a former member of the PRC’s Political Security Protection Bureau (國安局政治安全保衛局) explained how he was instructed to lure an exiled Chinese dissident to Cambodia by offering them a job opportunity within Prince Group’s real estate arm, so that they could ultimately be forced back to China.

The United States’ [Department of the Treasury](#)’s decision to sanction the Prince Group and designate the conglomerate as a transnational criminal organization combined with the [Department of Justice](#)’s recent unsealing of a federal indictment against Chen Zhi signals that this issue is beginning to be taken more seriously. Western sanctions have encouraged action in East Asia: with [Korea now considering sanctions](#) of its own, and Taiwanese authorities [opening an investigation](#) into the Prince Group’s Taiwan-based activities.

The Domino Effect of Enforcement

The scam industry in Cambodia may be “too big to fail,” with revenues allegedly accounting for the [equivalent of 60 percent of the country’s GDP](#). Nonetheless, the US Treasury’s decision to [classify Prince Group as a transnational criminal organization](#), along with coordinated US/UK sanctions targeting the group and its associates, have set off a domino effect of enforcement in Asia.



Image: A scam center in Bamban (northern Philippines) after it was raided by police (May 2024). Such scam centers, operated by organized crime figures and frequently involving human trafficking, have proliferated through parts of southeast Asia. (Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#))

Unlike the UK's [sanctions announcement](#)—which only named four companies as well as Chen Zhi—the US announcement contained an extended list of companies and individuals targeted by this latest wave of sanctions. This includes nine [Taiwan based-companies](#) as well as [three Taiwanese nationals](#), who are believed to be connected to a Palau-based company controlled by Chen Zhi. The international network of sanctioned entities hints at the possible expansion of these compounds into other countries and regions of the globe.

Taiwan's reaction to this announcement was immediate, with the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office (臺北地方檢察署) standing up a [dedicated task force](#) involving various branches of law enforcement the very next day (October 15, 2025). This investigation uncovered two additional Taiwan-based companies linked to the Prince Group and led to a series of raids on November 4, in which 11 people were arrested and assets seized. These arrests were not the end of the story, however, as the [low bail amount](#) granted for one of those arrested—and a photo of another [smiling](#) at her bail hearing—created public outcry both in Taiwan and abroad.

However, none of the high-level executives of Prince Group reside in Taiwan. Therefore, those now facing legal enforcement in Taiwan are arguably dispensable and may simply be replaced by the organization in due time. As a result, it is difficult to foresee how effective Taiwan's sanctions and police actions will be.

A Slow Start

For years, NGOs have been advocating for the sanctioning of those involved in the scam compounds. While a step in the right direction, and a sign that the

international community is willing to finally face this issue, these recent sanctions appear to act more as a band-aid solution rather than as a cure.

A Human Research Consultancy [report](#), published in May of this year, recommended the imposition of sanctions on 28 individuals for their alleged involvement in the compounds. As of November 10, 2025, only nine among them have been sanctioned by the US—and some of those nine were sanctioned prior to their involvement in the compounds coming to light (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Such is the case of [Try Pheap](#), a Cambodian tycoon who owns a special economic zone in which a [major scam compound](#) is located, and who was sanctioned by the United States in 2019 for environmental destruction and large-scale corruption. While a group of US legislators have introduced the [Dismantle Foreign Scam Syndicates Act](#) (which would sanction 27 of the 28 recommended in the May report as well as others), the bill is yet to pass.

Sadly, as time passes, the number of those trafficked to staff the compounds continues to grow, meaning that the longer it takes for this crisis to be taken seriously, the more victims will be snared. If past crackdowns have taught us anything, it is that scam compounds facing crackdowns will simply [re-locate](#) or lay low for a while before [re-emerging exactly where they were before](#). Attention therefore also needs to be paid to the environment that allows this industry to thrive, and how it could potentially be disrupted. Scam compounds, while similar in their “business model,” are usually independent from one another. Consequently, bringing down the Prince Group is far from enough to shut down the industry as a whole.

There are a number of other reasons why this issue is so hard to tackle. The [most cited of these reasons](#) is the corruption and complicity of the government in Cambodia. Anti-trafficking investigations suffer from unreliable funding, rendering [local law enforcement susceptible to corruption](#). Meanwhile, many of the businessmen with known connections to the compounds also have strong relationships with the Cambodian political elite. For example, one compound director was the subject of an INTERPOL Red Notice in 2013, but is thought to receive special treatment in Cambodia thanks to his [close ties to military and government officials](#). It is also important to highlight that [the Cambodian government has been quietly suffocating local civil society groups](#), leaving very few people willing to partake in advocacy against this issue. Meanwhile, the [recent cuts to USAID](#) have cut off oxygen to local civil society, which was already on life-support. Cuts have

[limited media coverage of the issue](#), and stripped [financial resources](#) from rescue groups.

The ongoing Prince Group case in Taiwan highlights that Taiwanese are involved on both sides of this crisis—as both victims and perpetrators. It also shows the willingness of Taiwanese authorities to contribute to the global response to this issue. Nonetheless, Taiwan’s exclusion from international law enforcement frameworks like [INTERPOL](#) forces Taipei into a reactionary position. Taiwan’s exclusion from global criminal information networks hinders its ability to be proactive in such transnational cases. However, Taiwan’s sluggish response also raises questions. One may ask why it took the United States imposing sanctions and indicting Chen Zhi for Taiwan to open a case of its own, especially as MOFA was made aware of the allegations against Prince Group and Chen Zhi in a Pacific Economics [report](#) from March this year.

Conclusion

In order to cure a disease, you need to tackle the cause, not just the symptoms. It is the same for the so-called “[scamdemic](#)” in Southeast Asia. While the international community may have little other recourse to tackle scam centers than through sanctions, this action alone is not enough to defeat the leadership of these operations. Even if sanctions have marked the beginning of the end for Chen Zhi and the Prince Group, the sad reality is that another network will probably emerge to take their place. If this issue is to be taken seriously, increased efforts need to be made to disrupt the environment that allows the compounds to thrive. Governments whose citizens are victims in this crisis—both of human trafficking and the online scams themselves—also need to look at how they are failing victims and indirectly contributing to an environment that allows these companies to thrive, whether through foreign aid cuts or an unclear distribution of government agencies’ responsibilities in handling these cases.

The main point: The US government’s decision to implement sanctions on Prince Group and a number of its executives for their role in Southeast Asia scam compounds has set off a domino effect, prompting Taiwanese authorities to open an investigation of their own into the group’s activities in Taiwan. While a step in the right direction, this action cannot solve the crisis on its own and fails to disrupt the environment that allows the compounds to thrive.

Building an NGO Hub in Taiwan: Enhancing Regional Collaboration

By: Robert Wang

Robert Wang is a senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and a member of the Global Taiwan Institute’s advisory board.

2025 Taiwan NGO Fellowship Program

In the fall of 2025, the Taiwan Alliance in International Development (Taiwan AID, 台灣海外援助發展聯盟)—a membership association for 30 Taiwanese non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—concluded the [third round](#) of its NGO Fellowship Program, inviting 12 young NGO workers from 11 countries in South and Southeast Asia to spend a month in Taiwan. The program’s goal is to provide them with knowledge and practical experience of Taiwan’s vibrant NGO community, as well as to expand Taiwanese collaboration with NGOs in the region. After a week-long workshop, during which local NGO professionals spoke on issues such as NGO accountability, fundraising strategies, organizational development, and advocacy work, the fellows were each separately [placed](#) within specific local NGOs in their own areas of expertise. The fellows from South and Southeast Asia spent three weeks at these Taiwanese NGOs in order to gain on-the-ground experience and connections with local civil society actors. At the closing ceremony, Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 外交部) hosted a celebratory dinner for the NGO fellows who were presented with certificates of participation in the program.

According to a brochure obtained by this author, Taiwan AID received more than 1,300 applications (from 57 countries) for the 2025 program cycle—a number similar to the interest received last year—demonstrating that there remains strong demand for such a program in Asia. Each of the 12 fellows selected had many years of experience working in NGOs in their own countries, on issues ranging from various health and environmental problems to childhood education, digital training, women’s empowerment, and rural development. Notably, this group included one wheelchair-bound fellow—who, despite becoming disabled after an accident 12 years ago, went on to open up a small orchid business, teach English, pursue graduate studies abroad, and work with an NGO to provide training and career support for others with disabilities in Vietnam. Another 2025 fellow works with an international NGO to deliver humanitarian assistance to communities in conflict-affected areas of Myanmar.

Additionally, this cohort included an NGO fellow who is an advocate for independent media and press freedom in Cambodia.

Despite initial budget challenges, Taiwan AID was eventually able to obtain funding for the third iteration of the NGO Fellowship Program from the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT, 美國在台協會) and Taiwan's MOFA—as had been the case in the past two rounds. In order to allow for continued American support, AIT shared with this author that it had worked with MOFA to move the program into the US Congressionally-funded [Global Cooperation and Training Framework](#) (GCTF) for this year. The GCTF bilateral cooperation platform was established in 2015 to give Taiwan an opportunity to share its technical and policy expertise with various government officials and professionals in the Indo-Pacific region. Over the past decade, [training areas](#) have included public health, law enforcement, e-commerce, energy efficiency, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, anti-corruption, women's empowerment, and combating disinformation. By incorporating the NGO Fellowship Program into its framework, GCTF has thus expanded its mission to include the training of NGO professionals in the region. At the same time, support for the NGO Fellowship Program has now been [broadened](#) to include Japan, Australia, and Canada, which each joined GCTF after its inception.

Setting up an NGO Fellowship Alumni Network

With its notable success over the past three years, the Taiwan NGO Fellowship Program has significantly expanded grassroots people-to-people ties between Taiwan and regional NGOs in Asia. Since its inception, this program has attracted nearly 3,000 applicants and, with the completion of the latest round in 2025, now counts 37 alumni fellows working in different NGOs across 15 countries in Asia. As the program continues in the years ahead, people-to-people ties between NGOs in the region will expand even further.

At the same time, however, it has become clear that more can be done to sustain and strengthen ties that are built through participation in the program. Understanding this, Taiwan AID has informed this author that it is setting up active alumni network that will sustain communication and collaboration among the NGO fellows themselves, as well as with Taiwanese NGOs long after they return to their own countries. Taiwan AID has thus reached out to program alumni to begin discussion on such a project. With this objective in mind, it invited a fellow from a previous cohort to speak at the 2025 closing ceremony on the subject of setting up an alumni network.

In this fellow's own words (shared with this author), “programs like this show us that collaboration isn't just possible—it's powerful. The bonds forged here between Taiwanese organizations and regional change-makers are proof that shared values can transcend political boundaries.” Noting that while he has personally continued to maintain contact with other fellows from previous years, “what we need now is to nurture and structure that momentum—turning individual achievements into collective impact, and alumni connections into an enduring regional community.”

2025 Asia NGO Forum on International Development

Apart from the NGO Fellowship Program, Taiwan AID also hosted the [“Asia NGO Forum on International Development”](#) in June 2025. Launched by Taiwan AID in 2014, this biennial two-day regional conference attracted more than 250 NGO experts from 11 Asian countries this year and focused on the practice and challenges of achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 16+: “Promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies.” The forum included NGO leaders from the United States, Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam, as well as Taiwan, who shared their views and experiences on this subject. Representatives from the Embassy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Indonesian Economic and Trade Office to Taipei, and the American Institute in Taiwan also attended the event.



Image: Participants in the “2025 Asian NGO International Development Forum,” held on June 27-28 at National Taiwan University in Taipei. (Image source: [Taiwan AID](#))

Speakers at this forum underscored the importance of assisting marginalized and disadvantaged groups within society, such as migrants, women and children. They also highlighted corporate anti-corruption actions and strengthening civil society as the foundation for achieving other sustainable development goals. At the

same time, many noted that the global humanitarian aid system is currently facing a shortage of manpower and unprecedented challenges due to major funding constraints. Participants at the forum thus not only addressed sustainable growth issues but also emphasized the need for greater cross-border support and collaboration in order to promote and sustain a just and inclusive world society.

Establishing an INGO Center in Taiwan

In June 2025, Taiwan's MOFA [announced](#) that it is now planning to establish an international nongovernmental organization (INGO) center in Taipei to attract more INGOs to Taiwan and to promote unofficial Track II (non-governmental people-to people) diplomacy. Charlie Chiang (江振璋), head of MOFA's Department of NGO International Affairs, [indicated](#) that the ministry has been trying to get more INGOs to open offices in Taiwan since 2020. Thus far, MOFA has attracted 13 INGOs, and is in discussion with another 37. Chiang said the ministry is presently searching out locations for the INGO center that would be spacious enough to house multiple INGO offices. Once finalized, the ministry will allocate funds in the fiscal year 2026 budget for its construction and opening.

Chiang added that MOFA is considering additional incentives to attract more INGOs to Taiwan. It is planning to offer rent subsidies to INGOs while streamlining regulations to make the entry process easier. For example, MOFA will make it possible for foreign national INGO leaders to move to Taiwan to open an office even before being granted residency, as long as they have MOFA's endorsement. Requirements have also been revised to significantly lower the financial threshold for a foreign foundation to open an office in Taiwan, and MOFA has now [set up](#) a bilingual website to help INGOs apply to open an office in Taiwan.

With the influx of INGOs, Taiwan will thus be able to further strengthen its role as a regional NGO hub. Given that most of these INGOs are likely to be primarily focused on carrying out work beyond Taiwan, their presence will simultaneously expand Taiwan's collaboration with other countries in East and Southeast Asia. At the same time, this opens up opportunities for Taiwan NGOs to work with Taiwan-based INGOs in the region and beyond, thus expanding Taiwan's track II ties with the rest of the world.

Conclusion

In the 21st century, Taiwan is emerging as an NGO hub in Asia. It has achieved this not only by holding confer-

ences but also by training regional NGO professionals and establishing itself as a headquarters for INGOs in the region. The long-term goal is to enable Taiwan's vibrant NGO community—along with Taiwan-based INGOs—to enhance collaboration with regional NGOs to address the needs of disadvantaged communities and strengthen civil societies in Asia.



Image: MOFA Vice Minister Chen Ming-chi, Director General of NGO International Affairs Department Chiang Zhen-Wei, AIT Public Diplomacy Officer Jennifer Steffensen, and Taiwan AID Chairperson Rebecca Wang (middle) attend a 2025 NGO Fellowship Program ceremony (Image Source: Taiwan AID, sent to this author)

Given the unfortunate rise of regional and global political forces that seek only to promote their own narrow interests while denying the rights and needs of others (such as refugees, immigrants and other disadvantaged communities), regional NGO collaboration is more important than ever. According to [Freedom House](#), the world has witnessed a continuous rise of autocracy and a decline in democracy over the past two decades. Moreover, we are again seeing the rise of autocratic regimes that seek to pursue their national ambitions and territorial claims by force and coercion without regard for the rules and values of the liberal international order—such as in the recent cases of Russia invading Ukraine, and China's multi-faceted campaigns of [coercion directed against Japan](#) and other countries across Asia.

At the same time, with the inclusion of the NGO Fellowship Program in the GCTF, cooperation between Taiwan, the United States, and countries across Asia is deepening. The proposal to establish an INGO Center in Taiwan promises to further expand the Taipei's global ties and its space for international engagement, especially in the face of increasing cross-Strait pressure.

The main point: Taiwanese NGOs, with the support of the government, AIT and international NGOs, are building an NGO hub in Taiwan that will enhance cross-border civil society collaboration and strengthen democratic values. Concurrently, this effort will expand Taiwan's people-to-people ties in the region and beyond.

The author would like to thank Taiwan AID for allowing him to observe the 2025 NGO Fellowship Program.
