

Taiwan's Quest for Meaningful Participation in International Organizations and responding China's Coercive Strategies

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1. Introduction

The Chinese Civil War between the nationalists headed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and the communists under the leadership of Mao Zedong led to earthshaking geopolitical transformations in East Asia. In 1949, the nationalist government of the Republic of China (ROC) evacuated to Taipei in the island of Taiwan while the communist People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged as the central government in mainland China. Since then, both PRC and Taiwan have maintained the "One China" concept, which involved them in a zero-sum competition. Eventually, this rivalry reduced the number of diplomatic allies of the ROC to 12 (including the Vatican) as the vast majority of countries switched their diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to the communist government in China over the decades.¹ Moreover, increasingly powerful

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¹ Patrick Mendis, "The Plight of Taiwan and China: Trump is No Reagan for the Vatican" (2020/10/12), *Harvard International Review*, <https://hir.harvard.edu/trump-is-no-reagan-for-vatican/>; Adam P. Liff and Dalton Lin, "The 'One China' Framework at 50 (1972–2022): The Myth of 'Consensus' and Its Evolving Policy Significance" (2022/9/26), visited date: 2023/8/8, *The China Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S030574102200131X>.

China has been carrying out a “comprehensive isolation campaign against Taiwan,” which led to the exclusion of the ROC from the United Nations (UN) and many other international organizations (IOs).²

This article focuses on China’s tactical maneuverings aimed at preventing Taipei from “meaningful participation” in international organizations—i.e., not only as a full member but also as an observer—as part of its comprehensive, coercive, anti-Taiwan strategy.³ In this article, the authors analyze the grand strategy of China and try to explain whether—and how—Taiwan can stand up to China’s pressure and (re) join or gain meaningful participation in a wide range of IOs, including the family of UN organizations. Furthermore, the two authors illustrate the consequences of China’s coercive actions against Taiwan for the international community—particularly for the like-minded democratic states.

2. Exclusion of the Republic of China from the United Nations

The ROC had a share in establishing the post-World War II international order as it was one of the founding members of the United Nations.⁴ The ROC representatives

² Jacob Stokes, Alexander Sullivan, with Zachary Durkee, *Global Island: Sustaining Taiwan’s International Participation Amid Mounting Pressure from China* (Center for a New American Security, April, 2022), https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/backgrounds/documents/GlobalIsland_Final.pdf?mtime=20220419160647&focal=none, p. 1.

³ This article is partly drawn from the research project of the authors, “Taiwan’s Participation in International Organizations: The Current Position of Poland and Its Possible Ways of Supporting Taipei” (2023/2), visited date: 2023/8/28, 《wnpism.uw》, <https://wnpism.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Taiwan-Report-on-Poland-and-IOs-by-Luszczkiewicz-and-Mendis-February-2023.pdf>.

⁴ The website of the Foreign Ministry of the PRC states: “A founding member of the United Nations and one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China made important contributions to the founding of the United Nations. In June 1945, the Chinese delegation, which included Dong Biwu, a representative of the Communist Party of China, signed the Charter of the United Nations,” *Struggle to Restore China’s Lawful Seat in the United Nations* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China), https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/ziliao_665539/3602_665543/3604_665547/200011/t20001117_697805.html. Indeed, Dong Biwu was a communist party member who signed the Charter. However, he was included in the ROC delegation to the United Nations along with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek’s representatives. ROC leader Chiang was reportedly pressured by the United States to include a communist party member in the UN delegation. See: James Tuck-Hong Tang, *Britain’s Encounter with Revolutionary China, 1949–54* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016), p. 144.

participated in the San Francisco UN Conference on International Organization between April 25 and June 26, 1945.⁵ Even though the PRC was established in the mainland barely four years later—on October 1, 1949—the ROC managed to keep the UN seat as the legal representative of China for more than two decades—until 1971.

The so-called ping pong diplomacy and the gradual normalization of Sino-American relations in the 1970s paved the way to the US-China rapprochement. As a result, the White House ceased its official relations with Taipei in order to establish diplomatic ties with China in 1979. Washington, however, maintained unofficial relations with Taiwan and guaranteed its security as confirmed by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, three US-China joint communiqués of 1972, 1978, and 1982, and the Six Assurances.⁶

The establishment of US-PRC official relations encouraged UN members to give a green light to the PRC representation. Having considered a number of draft resolutions and amendments in October 1971, the UN General Assembly eventually voted in favor of including the PRC and removing the ROC.⁷ Paradoxically, the United States itself did not want to replace the ROC with the PRC in the United Nations—instead, Washington opted for dual representation, i.e., keeping representation for the ROC and granting a seat to the PRC at the same time.⁸ Nevertheless, the UN Resolution 2758 on the Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United

⁵ “The San Francisco UN Conference on International Organization,” *United Nations*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/history-of-the-un/san-francisco-conference>; “Founding Member States,” visited date: 2023/8/6, *Dag Hammarskjöld Library*, <https://research.un.org/en/unmembers/founders>.

⁶ “President Reagan’s Six Assurances to Taiwan” (2023/6/13), visited date: 2023/8/28, *Congressional Research Service*, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF11665.pdf>.

⁷ Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, “The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan’s Access to the United Nations” (2022/3), visited date: 2023/8/7, *The German Marshall Fund of the United States*, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/distortion-un-resolution-2758-and-limits-taiwans-access-united-nations>, pp. 11-12; Michael Mazza and Gary Schmitt, “Righting a Wrong: Taiwan, the United Nations, and United States Policy” (2021/10/25), visited date: 2023/9/7, *Project 2049 Institute*, <https://project2049.net/2021/10/25/righting-a-wrong-taiwan-the-united-nations-and-united-states-policy/>, p. 5; Ewa Trojnar, *Tajwan. Dylematy rozwoju* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2015), pp. 80-82.

⁸ “United States Efforts to Secure Dual Representation for China in the United Nations (November 1970–October 1971)” (1973/9), visited date: 2023/8/9, *Office of the Historian, US Department of State*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v05/d455>.

Nations, adopted at the 1976th plenary session on October 25, 1971, mandated to restore all its rights to the People's Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it.⁹

Thus, the UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 clarified that the representation of the People's Republic of China was the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations. In the next decades, however, the PRC has linked the resolution to its “One China Principle”—which states that Taiwan is part of the PRC and there is no sovereign ROC—to prevent Taiwan from participating in international diplomacy.¹⁰ It is important to stress, however, that the 1971 UN resolution did not even include the names “Republic of China” or “Taiwan”—it only placed the People's Republic in a UN China seat.¹¹ In other words, Resolution 2758 neither affirmed nor denied the status of the Republic of China as a state.

Nevertheless, China has used the UN resolution to carry out its misinformation campaign aimed at weakening Taiwan's international position and strengthening China's influences in international organizations. As a result, Taiwan has faced a range of obstacles when seeking meaningful participation in—and contribution to—international organizations within the UN system and beyond. The ROC has condemned the PRC for “intentionally misinterpreting” the 1971 UN resolution.¹²

⁹ The Full Text of the UN Resolution 2758 on Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations, 1971, visited date: 2022/8/9, *《United Nations Digital Library》*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/192054>.

¹⁰ “Third, the UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 adopted in 1971 resolved once and for all the representation of the whole of China, Taiwan included, within the United Nations and expelled Taiwan's so-called representatives from the United Nations. It confirmed that Taiwan is a part of China, and also eliminated any room for creating ‘two Chinas’ or ‘one China, one Taiwan.’” See “Wang Yi Elaborates on the Real Status Quo of Taiwan Question” (2022/9/23), visited date: 2023/8/10, *《Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China》*, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wshd_665389/202209/t20220924_10771034.html.

¹¹ Michael Mazza and Gary Schmitt, “Righting a Wrong: Taiwan, the United Nations, and United States Policy,” p. 9; Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, “The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan's Access to the United Nations,” p. 12.

¹² “Taiwan Accuses China of Misinterpreting U.N. Resolution 2758” (2022/9/25), visited date: 2023/8/10, *《Focus Taiwan》*, <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202209250008>.

Naturally, expulsion from the UN does not mean that Taiwan is absent from all international organizations; however, China's pressure has severely impacted Taiwan's ability to participate in wide range of IOs.¹³ Moreover, the ROC was not expelled from various organizations at once in 1971—for example, it took another 13 years to be expelled from the Lyon-based International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) after the original exclusion from the United Nations.¹⁴ In other cases, the process of joining international organizations has been arduous and compromising, as Taiwan has sometimes been forced to operate under a name other than the Republic of China. The well-known case is Taiwan's membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO), where Taiwan has been defined as the “Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu (Chinese Taipei).”¹⁵

3. China's Anti-Taiwan Campaign in IOs

China has been able to put pressure on international organizations and influence their policy positions on Taiwan due to several factors. *First*, China succeeded in having a vast number of its nationals employed in the UN at various levels: there were over

¹³ The ROC has a full membership in 40 intergovernmental organizations and their subsidiary bodies—including the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the World Organization of Animal Health, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Moreover, Taiwan has an observer (or other) status in 25 intergovernmental organizations and their ancillary bodies—including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as well as the committees of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Central American Integration System. “Foreign Affairs,” visited date: 2023/8/7, *《Government Portal of the Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_5.php.

¹⁴ Michael Mazza and Gary Schmitt, “Righting a Wrong: Taiwan, the United Nations, and United States Policy,” p. 11; Joseph Yeh, “Taiwan Calls Lack of Interpol Invitation ‘Regrettable’” (2022/10/8), visited date: 2022/8/9, *《Focus Taiwan》*, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202210180006>.

¹⁵ “Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu (Chinese Taipei) and the WTO,” visited date: 2023/8/9, *《World Trade Organization》*, https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/chinese_taipei_e.htm; “Protocol of Accession of the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu” (2004/3/8), visited date: 2023/8/10, *《Laws & Regulations Database of the Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=Y0040176>.

1,300 Chinese citizens among the regular staff of the UN as of 2019.¹⁶ *Second*, China's strategy includes placing Chinese nationals in senior ranks across the UN funds and programs, its principal organs, and other UN-affiliated international organizations.¹⁷ *Third*, China has been accused of inserting non-Chinese who are supportive of China's agenda in international organizations. For example, in the light of controversies related to the Chinese authorities' efforts to manage the widespread of Covid-19 virus and China's communication strategy, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus of Ethiopia has widely been considered by many to be an outspoken advocate for the Chinese government's epidemiological response.¹⁸

This grand, multi-layered strategy has led to strengthening China's influences in IOs, and—consequently—promoting China's anti-Taiwan strategy in the UN. It is important to observe that China not only prevents the Taiwanese representation from the UN itself, but also influences a wide range of its activities and events by:

- a) Restricting NGOs from UN access and accreditation, if they do not comply with China's demands to revise the name of "Taiwan" to "Taiwan, Province of China" on their websites and publications;¹⁹
- b) Editing UN documents to accommodate PRC's preferences;²⁰
- c) Excluding Taiwanese nationals from scientific conferences co-sponsored by the

¹⁶ "Personnel Statistics, Data as at 31 December 2019," visited date: 2023/8/14, *United Nations Digital Library*, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3884998>.

¹⁷ "PRC Representation in International Organizations" (2022/12), visited date: 2023/8/17, *U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/PRC Representation in International Organizations December2022.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/PRC%20Representation%20in%20International%20Organizations%20December2022.pdf).

¹⁸ Michael Collins, "The WHO and China: Dereliction of Duty" (2020/2/27), *Council on Foreign Relations*, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/who-and-china-dereliction-duty>; François Godement, "Fighting the Coronavirus Pandemic: China's Influence at the World Health Organization" (2020/3/23), visited date: 2023/8/26, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/03/23/fighting-coronavirus-pandemic-china-s-influence-at-world-health-organization-pub-81405>.

¹⁹ Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, "The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan's Access to the United Nations," pp. 32-37.

²⁰ Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, "The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan's Access to the United Nations," pp. 32-37.

UN and its specialized agencies.²¹

A striking example of China's far-reaching influences was provided in 2020 and 2021 when China blocked Wikimedia Foundation's accreditation to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). China accused the Foundation of spreading disinformation via the independent, volunteer-led Taiwan chapter.²²

Another case was provided by the leaked information about a secret Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of 2005 between the WHO and PRC. The MoU itself was never made public, but the Memorandum on Implementation of the 2005 China-WHO Taiwan MoU, after it leaked, was made publicly available on WikiSource—until it was taken down in 2020.²³ The MoU restricted Taiwan's access to the WHO and its facilities, and used the name “Taiwan, China.”²⁴

4. Prospects for Taiwan: The Case Study of UNESCO

From the legal point of view, (re)joining the United Nations and its agencies is not a lost cause for Taiwan as it continues to campaign for gaining meaningful participation

²¹ “Taiwanese Researchers Shut Out of International Science Conference” (2020/12/11), visited date: 2023/8/7, *《Asia Watch, Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada》*, <https://www.asiapacific.ca/asia-watch/taiwanese-researchers-shut-out-international-science>; Margaret McCuaig-Johnston, “Enhancing Taiwan's Role in International Organizations” (2021/2), visited date: 2023/8/12, *《Canadian Global Affairs Institute》*, https://www.cgai.ca/enhancing_taiwans_role_in_international_organizations.

²² “China Again Blocks Wikimedia Foundation's Accreditation to World Intellectual Property Organization” (2021/10/5), visited date: 2023/8/26, *《Wikimedia Foundation》*, <https://wikimediafoundation.org/news/2021/10/05/china-again-blocks-wikimedia-foundations-accreditation-to-world-intellectual-property-organization/>.

²³ According to the Marshall Fund report, the WHO memorandum of implementation was accessible until at least 2020/9/19. Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, “The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan's Access to the United Nations,” p. 40. Now it can be accessed at unofficial sources, e.g., Memorandum on Implementation of the 2005 China-WHO Taiwan MOU, https://goachronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Memorandum_on_implementation_of_the_2005_China-WHO_Taiwan_MOU.pdf.

²⁴ According to the Marshall Fund report, the WHO memorandum of implementation was accessible until at least 2020/9/19. Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, “The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan's Access to the United Nations,” p. 40. Now it can be accessed at unofficial sources, e.g., Memorandum on Implementation of the 2005 China-WHO Taiwan MOU, https://goachronicle.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Memorandum_on_implementation_of_the_2005_China-WHO_Taiwan_MOU.pdf.

in the UN family of specialized agencies. Most importantly, many of them—like the WHO, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)—do not require the UN membership to join. Moreover, whereas statehood is a prerequisite in various agencies,²⁵ the very term “state” is not defined by the UN Charter.²⁶ It is crucial to observe that neither the 1971 resolution nor any other UN document defined the status of Taiwan.

An interesting case—and an important political lesson—for Taiwan about joining UN agencies despite international controversies is provided by UNESCO.²⁷ Taiwan is currently excluded from UNESCO as it has neither a member nor associate member status.²⁸ However, joining UNESCO has already been expressed by Taiwan as its Ministry of Culture (MoC) has prepared a list of potential UNESCO sites.²⁹ Nevertheless, China has been blocking the recognition of those MoC sites by the Paris-based organization.³⁰

Palestine provides a highly controversial yet successful example of joining UNESCO by gaining full membership in the agency without a prior inclusion in the United Nations.³¹ The Constitution of UNESCO declares that “states not members of the United Nations Organization may be admitted to membership of the Organization, upon recommendation of the Executive Board, by a two-thirds majority vote of the

²⁵ For example, the WHO Constitution states that it “shall be open to all States,” visited date: 2023/8/7, *《Constitution of the World Health Organization, World Health Organization》*, <https://apps.who.int/gb/bd/PDF/bd47/EN/constitution-en.pdf?ua=1>.

²⁶ “United Nations Charter (full text),” visited date: 2023/8/7, *《United Nations》*, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text> [accessed on].

²⁷ Patrick Mendis and Antonina Łuszczkiewicz, “The United States Must Rejoin UNESCO for Its Perpetuum Mobile” (2021/7/27), *《Harvard International Review》*, <https://hir.harvard.edu/the-united-states-must-rejoin-unesco/>.

²⁸ “List of the Member States and the Associate Members of UNESCO and the Date on Which They Became Members (or Associate Members) of the Organization,” visited date: 2023/8/18, *《UNESCO》*, <https://pax.unesco.org/countries/ListeMS.html>.

²⁹ “Potential World Heritage Sites in Taiwan,” visited date: 2023/8/18, *《Ministry of Culture, Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, https://www.moc.gov.tw/en/informationlist_130.html.

³⁰ Jason Pan, “Academics Urge Action on World Heritage Sites” (2013/9/18), visited date: 2023/8/10, *《Taipei Times》*, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2013/09/18/2003572437>.

³¹ Jonathan Schanzer, Richard Goldberg, and Mark Montgomery, “Taiwan 194” (2022/2/17), visited date: 2023/8/29, *《Foundation for Defence of Democracies》*, <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2022/02/17/taiwan-194/>.

General Conference.”³² Palestine was accepted as a member—and a state—despite the opposition from many countries, including the United States, on October 31, 2011. It was possible thanks to the fact that every member of the Executive Board has one vote, there is no veto power, whereas a general voting is based on a majority rule.³³

Interestingly, Palestine is not the only example of a nation state joining UNESCO prior to entering the UN or without joining UN at all. For instance, Austria,³⁴ Hungary,³⁵ and Japan³⁶ joined UNESCO years before entering the UN.³⁷ Moreover, apart from Palestine, there are currently two other UNESCO member states which are not UN members: Cook Islands³⁸ and Niue in the Pacific.³⁹

The UNESCO quest was a part of a grand diplomatic campaign known as “Palestine 194,” whose aim was to gain international recognition of the State of Palestine and to obtain membership in the UN as its 194th member.⁴⁰ Even though the campaign did not conclude with a full success, Palestine was granted the status of a non-member observer state in the United Nations on November 29, 2012.⁴¹ The same status

³² “Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization” (1945/11/16), visited date: 2023/8/18, *《UNESCO》*, <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution>.

³³ “Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization”; “UNESCO Votes to Admit Palestine as Full Member” (2011/10/31), visited date: 2023/8/30, *《UN News》*, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2011/10/393562>.

³⁴ “UNESCO,” visited date: 2023/8/18, *《UNESCO》*, <https://www.unesco.at/ueber-uns/oesterreich-und-die-unesco?r=1>.

³⁵ “More Information: Hungary,” visited date: 2023/8/29, *《UNESCO》*, <https://en.unesco.org/countries/hungary/information>.

³⁶ “Japan,” visited date: 2023/8/29, *《UNESCO》*, <https://en.unesco.org/countries/japan>.

³⁷ “The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – Membership,” visited date: 2023/8/29, *《Nations Encyclopedia》*, <https://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations-Related-Agencies/The-United-Nations-Educational-Scientific-and-Cultural-Organization-UNESCO-MEMBERSHIP.html#ixzz7r4PYYwZq>.

³⁸ “Cook Islands,” visited date: 2023/8/28, *《UNESCO》*, <https://en.unesco.org/countries/cook-islands>.

³⁹ “Niue,” visited date: 2023/8/29, *《UNESCO》*, <https://en.unesco.org/countries/niue>.

⁴⁰ “Palestine 194 Calls on UN Members to Support Palestinian Bid” (2015/12/31), visited date: 2023/8/29, *《Wafa News Agency》*, <https://english.wafa.ps/Pages/Details/112402>.

⁴¹ “The Question of Palestine,” visited date: 2023/8/30, *《United Nations》*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/history/>.

has been held by the Holy See (the Vatican) since 1964.⁴²

When Palestine was admitted to UNESCO as a full member in 2011, the United States stopped funding the Paris-based UN body.⁴³ This decision was in accordance with the 1990 law passed during the Bill Clinton administration,⁴⁴ which determines that the United States may not fund any part of the UN system that grants Palestine the same standing as UN member states. Having stopped paying dues—22 percent of the UNESCO annual budget—the United States lost its voting rights.⁴⁵

Seven years later, at the end of December 2018, the Trump White House withdrew completely from the UN agency,⁴⁶ accusing UNESCO of continued anti-Israel bias and claiming the need for fundamental reforms in the organization.⁴⁷ Washington's withdrawal had long-term, global consequences, as it left more space for China to replace the United States not just with its pressure and influences, but also financial leverage coming from the membership dues.

The \$1.7 trillion Omnibus Appropriations Bill passed by the US Congress on December 22, 2022, provided a waiver for the 1990 law, which allowed the United States to return to UNESCO on July 11, 2023, and pay the past dues.⁴⁸ As the Bill

⁴² “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 1 July 2003. Participation of the Holy See in the work of the United Nations,” visited date: 2023/8/21, *《United Nations》*, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/514/70/PDF/N0351470.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁴³ Colum Lynch, “UNESCO Votes to Admit Palestine; U.S. Cuts off Funding” (2011/10/31), visited date: 2023/8/3, *《Washington Post》*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/unesco-votes-to-admit-palestine-over-us-objections/2011/10/31/gIQAMleYZM_story.html.

⁴⁴ Public Law 101-246—Feb. 16, 1990; Sec. 414. Membership of the Palestine Liberation Organization in United Nations Agencies, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-104/pdf/STATUTE-104-Pg15.pdf>.

⁴⁵ “US Loses UNESCO Voting Rights after Stopping Funds over Palestine Decision” (2013/11/8), visited date: 2023/8/31, *《The Guardian》*, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/08/us-unesco-voting-funds-palestine-decision>.

⁴⁶ “The United States Withdraws From UNESCO—US Department of State Press Release” (2017/10/12), visited date: 2023/8/4, *《United Nations》*, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/the-united-states-withdraws-from-unesco-us-department-of-state-press-release/>.

⁴⁷ Olivia B. Waxman, “The U.S. Has Left UNESCO Before. Here’s Why” (2017/10/12), visited date: 2023/8/26, *《The Time》*, <https://time.com/4980034/unesco-trump-us-leaving-history/>.

⁴⁸ Matthew Lee, “US Formally Rejoins UNESCO after Five-Year Absence” (2023/7/11), *《Associated Press》*, <https://apnews.com/article/us-unesco-6380e9bfc62c02e6669d227590d44341>; “The ‘Waiver Authority’ to rejoin UNESCO legislation in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023,” visited date: 2023/8/2, *《US Senate》*, <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/JRQ121922.PDF>, pp. 1582-1583.

openly states, the purpose of waiving the Palestine-related law was to “counter Chinese influence or to promote other national interests of the United States.”⁴⁹ It therefore seems justified to claim that Washington is now trying to regain the support of the global community and strengthen its influences in the UN and its agencies, possibly preparing for a long-term “battle” with China over international organizations—including counterbalancing China’s anti-Taiwan activities.⁵⁰

5. The Case Study of WHO

In recent years, Taiwan has been particularly active in its efforts to gain meaningful participation in the World Health Organization (WHO). In particular, Taipei’s goal is to be granted an observer status at the World Health Assembly (WHA)—the decision-making body of WHO.

The ROC has been excluded from the WHO as a consequence of the UN Resolution 2758 passed in 1971. On May 10, 1972, the Executive Board of the World Health Organization in Geneva adopted its own resolution which “recommends to the World Health Assembly that it recognize the Government of the People’s Republic of China as the only Government having the right to represent China in the World Health Organization.”⁵¹ As a result, the Board decided to

restore all its rights to the People’s Republic of China and to recognize the representatives of its Government as the only legitimate representatives of China to the World Health Organization, and to expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-Shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the World

⁴⁹ “The ‘Waiver Authority’ to rejoin UNESCO legislation in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023”.

⁵⁰ Patrick Mendis and Antonina Łuszczkiewicz, “The United States Must Rejoin UNESCO for Its Perpetuum Mobile”; Patrick Mendis and Antonina Łuszczkiewicz, “The United States Must Rejoin UNESCO to Compete with China” (2023/3/22), visited date: 2023/8/23, *《The National Interest》*, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/united-states-must-rejoin-unesco-compete-china-206334>.

⁵¹ “Representation of China within the United Nations System” (1972/5), visited date: 2023/8/14, *《International Legal Materials》*, Vol. 11, No. 3, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020782900035981>, p. 566.

Health Organization.⁵²

During the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016) from the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), Taiwan—or, rather, “Chinese Taipei”—was invited to the WHA as an observer from 2009–2016 on an annual basis.⁵³ However, in the aftermath of the election of President Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 2016 and her refusal to affirm the 1992 Consensus between China and Taiwan,⁵⁴ Taipei was yet again prevented from participating in the WHA.⁵⁵

Since 2016, Taiwan has not received an invitation to attend the WHA. Moreover, all its attempts to regain an observer status were consistently blocked. For example, in May 2022, the president of the WHA, Dr. Ahmed Robleh Abdilleh—also a health minister of Djibouti—said that the proposal sent by 13 WHO members (the then-diplomatic allies of Taipei) to allow Taiwan to join as an observer would not even be included in the official agenda.⁵⁶ This decision disregarded a wide support for inviting Taiwan as an observer from the United States,⁵⁷ all G7 economies,⁵⁸ as well as many

⁵² “Representation of China in the World Health Organization” in *Official Records Of The World Health Organization, no. 201, Twenty-Fifth World Health Assembly*, Geneva, 9-26 May 1972, Part I *Resolutions and Decisions, Annexes*, visited date: 2023/8/11, *《World Health Organization》*, Geneva 1972, https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85850/Official_record201_eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, p. 1.

⁵³ Jacques deLisle, “Taiwan in the World Health Assembly: A Victory, with Limits” (2009/5/13), visited date: 2023/8/11, *《Brookings Institution》*, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/taiwan-in-the-world-health-assembly-a-victory-with-limits/>.

⁵⁴ “President Tsai Affirms Taiwan Will Not Accept ‘One Country, Two Systems’” (2019/1/3), visited date: 2023/8/11, *《New Southbound Policy Portal》*, https://nsppe.mofa.gov.tw/nsppe/content_tt.php?unit=2&post=148108.

⁵⁵ Michael Mazza and Gary Schmitt, “Righting a Wrong: Taiwan, the United Nations, and United States Policy,” p. 13; Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, “The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan’s Access to the United Nations,” p. 7.

⁵⁶ “Taiwan Backers Seek Invitation to Major Health Assembly, WHO Says” (2022/5/16), visited date: *《Reuters》*, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-backers-seek-invitation-major-health-assembly-who-says-2022-05-16/>; “Taiwan Fails in Bid to Join WHO Assembly after China Pressure” (2022/5/22), visited date: 2023/8/12, *《Reuters》*, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwans-efforts-join-who-assembly-fail-2022-05-23/>.

⁵⁷ Antony J. Blinken, “Taiwan as an Observer in the World Health Assembly” (2022/8/18), visited date: 2023/8/12, *《US Department of State》*, <https://www.state.gov/taiwan-as-an-observer-in-the-world-health-assembly/>.

⁵⁸ “Taiwan Thanks G7 for Second Straight Year of Support” (2022/5/15), visited date: 2023/8/12, *《Focus Taiwan》*, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202205150012>.

other countries—such as Australia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Slovakia, and Sweden, which expressed their support in the form of direct endorsements, official statements, parliamentary resolutions, or through social media.⁵⁹

Even though Taiwan is not a member of the WHO, it was the first country to inform the agency about the suspicious virus transmissions originating from the Chinese city of Wuhan.⁶⁰ According to the statement of the Central Epidemic Command Center in Taipei, Taiwan sent an email to the International Health Regulations focal point of the WHO on December 31, 2019. It informed the WHO of its understanding of the disease and requested further information from the WHO.⁶¹ Later, the Trump White House accused the WHO of ignoring Taiwanese warnings over China's coronavirus outbreak.⁶²

Since then, Taiwan has been widely recognized and globally praised as one of the countries which combatted the new virus most successfully.⁶³ Moreover, Taiwan made international headlines as an aid donor through its “Taiwan Can Help, and Taiwan Is

⁵⁹ “MOFA Thanks International Community for Strong Support at the 75th WHA” (2022/5/29), visited date: 2023/8/12, *《Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, https://en.mofa.gov.tw/News_Content.aspx?n=1328&s=97931.

⁶⁰ Patrick Mendis and Joey Wang, “How China Made the Coronavirus Worse” (2020/3/29), visited date: 2023/8/12, *《The National Interest》*, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-china-made-coronavirus-worse-138517>.

⁶¹ “The Facts Regarding Taiwan’s Email to Alert WHO to Possible Danger of COVID-19” (2020/4/11), visited date: 2023/8/7, *《Taiwan Centers for Disease Control》*, https://www.cdc.gov.tw/En/Bulletin/Detail/PAD-lbwDHeN_bLa-viBOuw?typeid=158.

⁶² “US Criticizes WHO for Ignoring Taiwan Virus Warnings” (2020/4/9), visited date: 2023/8/7, *《France24》*, <https://www.france24.com/en/20200409-us-criticizes-who-for-ignoring-taiwan-virus-warnings>.

⁶³ See for example: a) “Inside Taiwan’s Response to COVID-19,” *《Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health》*, <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/events/covid-19-events-and-briefings/inside-taiwans-response-to-covid-19/>; b) Amy Qin and Amy Chang Chien, “The Island that Covid Forgot: Life Goes on as Nearly Normal in Booming Taiwan” (2021/3/16), *《The Irish Times》*, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/the-island-that-covid-forgot-life-goes-on-as-nearly-normal-in-booming-taiwan-1.4512052>; c) Anne-Marie Schleich, “Responding Successfully to COVID-19: A Case Study of Taiwan’s Strategy” (2020/5), *《ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security》*, No. 697, https://www.ispsw.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/697_Schleich.pdf; d) Jennifer Summers et. al., “Potential Lessons from the Taiwan and New Zealand Health Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic” (2020/11), visited date: 2023/8/11, *《The LANCET Regional Health Western Pacific》*, Vol. 4, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanwpc.2020.100044>.

Helping” campaign.⁶⁴ Despite successes in foreign assistance projects, however, Taiwan faced its own problems stemming from the lack of membership in the WHO and China’s interference.

For example, Taiwan accused China of putting pressure on a German firm producing Covid-19 vaccines, as China made it nearly impossible for Taiwan to buy vaccines directly.⁶⁵ In the end, two of the world’s biggest technology manufacturers—Taiwanese firms Foxconn, which makes devices for Apple, and the giant semiconductor chip producer TSMC—as well as the Tzu Chi Foundation brokered agreements worth \$350 million for the BioNTech vaccine, thus helping to bypass the problem of the Taiwanese government buying vaccines directly.⁶⁶

Initially, Taiwan had to rely on vaccine donations from abroad. The United States⁶⁷ and Japan⁶⁸ became the two biggest donors, however, the middle and small sized countries like Lithuania,⁶⁹ the Czech Republic,⁷⁰ Slovakia,⁷¹ and

⁶⁴ “Taiwan Can Help, and Taiwan is Helping!” visited date: 2023/8/11, *《Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, <https://covid19.mohw.gov.tw/en/cp-4789-53866-206.html>.

⁶⁵ Lawrence Chung, “Taiwan Suggests Mainland China Pressured BioNTech to Abandon Covid-19 Vaccine Deal” (2021/2/17), visited date: 2023/8/16, *《South China Morning Post》*, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/politics/article/3122069/taiwan-says-mainland-china-pressured-biontech-abandon-covid-19?module=inline&pgtype=article>.

⁶⁶ Craig C. Lewis, “Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation Inks Deal to Source COVID Vaccines for Taiwan” (2021/7/12), visited date: 2022/8/25, *《Buddhistdoor Global》*, <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/buddhist-tzu-chi-foundation-inks-deal-to-source-covid-vaccines-for-taiwan/>; “Taiwan Tech Giants Foxconn and TSMC to Buy 10m Covid Jabs” (2021/7/12), visited date: 2023/8/17, *《BBC News》*, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57801031>.

⁶⁷ Michael Martina, David Brunnstrom, and Andrea Shalal, “U.S. Triples Vaccines for Taiwan with 2.5 Million-Dose Shipment” (2021/6/19), visited date: 2023/8/17, *《Reuters》*, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/exclusive-us-triples-vaccines-taiwan-with-25-million-dose-shipment-2021-06-19/>.

⁶⁸ “Presidential Office Thanks Japan for Fourth COVID-19 Vaccine Donation” (2021/9/7), visited date: 2023/8/16, *《Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, <https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/6160>.

⁶⁹ “Lithuania Donates More COVID-19 Vaccines to Taiwan” (2021/9/22), visited date: 2023/8/15, *《Reuters》*, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/lithuania-donates-more-covid-19-vaccines-taiwan-2021-09-22/>.

⁷⁰ “Presidential Office Thanks Czech Republic for Vaccine Donation” (2021/8/29), visited date: 2023/8/16, *《Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6153>.

⁷¹ “Presidential Office Thanks Slovakia for Expanded Vaccine Donation” (2021/9/26), visited date: 2023/8/17, *《Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan)》*, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6167>.

Poland⁷² made significant vaccine donations to Taiwan as well. This episode has been a reminder of Taiwan's "geopolitical vulnerability" and a self-explanatory example as to why Taipei had decided to develop its own Covid-19 vaccine.⁷³

Securing an observer seat at the WHO is an important goal for Taiwan as it would not only allow it to participate meaningfully in WHA discussions, but also to contribute successfully to the global community. Notwithstanding, Taiwan was barred from participating in the official WHO consultations, during which Taiwanese experts, experienced in combating the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) back in 2003, were not able to share their knowledge and experience at the WHO.⁷⁴

6. International Support for Taiwan's Participation in IOs

Since 1971 and the exclusion from the UN, Taiwan has gone a long way to transform itself into one of the most vibrant democracies in the world. As a consequence, the support for Taiwan and its presence in international organizations has significantly risen from other democracies in recent years.⁷⁵

Supporting Taiwan's meaningful participation in—and contribution to—the UN system, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken assured on October 26, 2021:

Taiwan's exclusion undermines the important work of the UN and its related bodies, all of which stand to benefit greatly from its contributions. We need to harness the contributions of all stakeholders toward solving our shared challenges. That is why we encourage all UN Member States to join us in supporting Taiwan's robust, meaningful participation throughout the UN system and in the international community, consistent with our "one China" policy, which is guided by the Taiwan

⁷² "Poland to Donate 400,000 Doses of AstraZeneca Vaccine to Taiwan" (2021/9/4), visited date: 2023/8/17, *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/poland-donate-400000-doses-astrazeneca-vaccine-taiwan-2021-09-04/>.

⁷³ Chunhuei Chi, "Taiwan and the Politics of Vaccine Warfare" (2021/8/13), visited date: 2023/8/17, *East Asia Forum*, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/08/13/taiwan-and-the-politics-of-vaccine-warfare/>.

⁷⁴ Kow-Tong Chen et. al., "SARS in Taiwan: An Overview and Lessons Learned," *Int J Infect Dis.*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (March, 2005), doi:10.1016/j.ijid.2004.04.015.

⁷⁵ "A New Low for Global Democracy" (2022/2/9), visited date: 2023/8/10, *The Economist*, <https://www.economist.com/graphic-detail/2022/02/09/a-new-low-for-global-democracy>.

Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances.⁷⁶

The European Union announced a similar policy recommendation recently. According to the “European Parliament Recommendation of 21 October 2021 to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on EU-Taiwan Political Relations and Cooperation,” the European Parliament

Recommends that the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission . . . strongly advocate for Taiwan’s meaningful participation as an observer in meetings, mechanisms and activities of international bodies, including the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); urge Member States and the EU institutions to support international initiatives calling for Taiwan’s participation in international organisations; welcome again Taiwan’s proactive cooperation with the international community in learning about the COVID-19 pandemic and finding the best ways to respond to it, and underline that this case has proven that Taiwan’s contributions in the WHO would be an added value to the health and well-being of the citizens of all its members.⁷⁷

Taiwan’s exclusion from international organizations has become very apparent and widely discussed in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic and the global efforts to contain the virus. It is therefore no coincidence that both the United States and the European Union’s support for Taiwan has become particularly strong for its presence in the WHO.

⁷⁶ Antony J. Blinken, “Supporting Taiwan’s Participation in the UN System” (2021/10/26), visited date: 2023/8/10, *US Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/supporting-taiwans-participation-in-the-un-system/>.

⁷⁷ “European Parliament Recommendation of 21 October 2021 to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on EU-Taiwan Political Relations and Cooperation (2021/2041(INI)),” visited date: 2023/8/5, *The European Parliament*, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0431_EN.html.

7. Conclusion

Barring Taiwan from any form of participation in international organizations—be it full membership or observer status—has been part of China's grand strategy to exercise non-military coercion.⁷⁸ In the meantime, the struggle of Taiwan and its democratic allies for influences in international organizations against China's pressure continues.

It is important to stress that the Chinese scheme is not just to exclude Taiwan from international diplomacy, but also to take control over IOs and, consequently, impose its own rules and modify the global governance.⁷⁹ Without a doubt, China's views on international order are very different from those held by the United States, the European Union, and other like-minded democratic allies and partners;⁸⁰ thus, it may be assumed that if China takes the lead in shaping the world order through international organizations, global efforts to protect human rights and democratic values might weaken and decrease.⁸¹

The quest for strengthening Taiwan's international presence and allowing it to meaningfully participate in IOs is therefore much more than a matter of international solidarity—it is a battle for maintaining the liberal world order and preserving democratic values.

⁷⁸ Michael Mazza and Gary Schmitt, "Righting a Wrong: Taiwan, the United Nations, and United States Policy," p. 13.

⁷⁹ Patrick Mendis and Joey Wang, "China is Touting Its Totalitarianism Taming of the Coronavirus Over US Democratic Failure" (2021/1/10), visited date: 2023/8/31, *《The National Interest》*, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-touting-its-totalitarianism-taming-coronavirus-over-us-democratic-failure-176076>.

⁸⁰ A long list of China's human rights violations in recent years includes: a) crushing the Hongkong protests against a series of draconian laws which de facto nullified the "one country, two systems" rule; b) violating the rights of Tibetan and Uighur minorities; c) detaining or prosecuting people who criticize the Chinese government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic; d) cracking down on human rights defenders; e) limiting the freedom of expression and religious worship; and f) developing mass surveillance systems, among others. Kenneth Roth, "China: Events of 2021," visited date: 2023/8/13, *《World Report 2022, Human Rights Watch》*, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/china-and-tibet>.

⁸¹ Jessica Drun and Bonnie Glaser, "The Distortion of UN Resolution 2758 to Limit Taiwan's Access to the United Nations," p.26.