

Taiwan and the World Health Organization: Good Health for All or Some?

DENNIS V. HICKEY

This study examines Taiwan's drive to gain a voice in the most important global institution related to public health—the World Health Organization (WHO). The article provides a general outline of Taiwan's participation in international organizations, explores several considerations that have led Taiwan to seek membership in the WHO, and discusses the obstacles Taipei must overcome in order to gain admission to the WHO. The paper suggests that, while the impediments confronting this movement are formidable, Taiwan and the international community should accelerate efforts in support of Taipei's application for observer status in the WHO.

KEYWORDS: Taiwan; international organizations; World Health Organization (WHO); China; health

* * *

When measured on almost any scale of economic and political development, the Republic of China (ROC or Taiwan) is the most successful Chinese-run nation in more than five thousand years. However, Taiwan continues to be locked out of many of the world's most important international organizations—most notably the United Nations and numerous af-

Dr. Dennis V. Hickey is Professor of Political Science, University Fellow in Research, and Director of the Graduate Program in International Affairs and Administration in the Political Science Department at Southwest Missouri State University. An authority on the international relations of East Asia, his latest book is entitled *East Asian Armies: Japan, China, Taiwan, and the Koreas* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, forthcoming in 2001).

filiated autonomous organizations including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

This paper provides a brief overview of Taiwan's drive to gain a voice in the most important global institution related to public health—the WHO. The paper provides a general outline of Taiwan's participation in international organizations, explores several considerations that have led the island to seek membership in the WHO, and discusses the obstacles Taipei must overcome in order to gain admission to the world body. In conclusion, the author suggests that, while the impediments confronting this movement are formidable, the ROC and the international community should accelerate efforts in support of Taipei's application for observer status in the WHO and help find ways for the island's voice to be heard in this important organization. To do otherwise would constitute an unjustifiable violation of the Taiwanese people's fundamental human rights.

Background and Evolution of Taiwan's Participation in International Organizations

In 1949, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang (KMT) government retreated to the island of Taiwan. Since that time, Taiwan's association with international organizations has gone through a complete cycle that started with active support and participation, moved to relative indifference and isolation, and finally returned to support and a passionate desire to participate. The discussion below briefly examines the three phases of Taiwan's participation in international organizations.

Phase One

During the first period, which extended from the early 1950s to the early 1970s, the ROC's strong international support and the People's Republic of China's (PRC's) failure to gain recognition from most of the global community enabled the KMT government to occupy the Chinese seat in the United Nations, the WHO, and most other significant international organizations. In January 1950, only several months after the founding of the Chinese Communist regime in Beijing, PRC authorities cabled UN

Secretary-General Trygve Lie, demanding Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations. For roughly two decades, however, the United States and its allies successfully blocked Beijing's efforts to take Taipei's UN seat.

From 1951 to 1960, the ROC's friends and allies argued that the PRC did not meet the UN Charter's prerequisites that members must be "peace-loving states." In 1960, as support for Beijing's admission began to mount, the United States and other states switched tactics and barred the PRC's membership by claiming that the Chinese representation issue was an "important question" under Art. 18 of the UN Charter and thus required a two-thirds majority vote of the General Assembly.¹ As Cold War tensions eased in the early 1970s, however, Taiwan's position began to deteriorate.

Phase Two

In the late 1960s, a shift in global alignments led the United States to reassess its stance toward the UN question. In an effort to patch up relations with Beijing, Washington reluctantly acquiesced to the position that the two-thirds rule was irrelevant to the Chinese representation issue. Rather than suffer the humiliation of expulsion, Chiang Kai-shek ordered his delegation to withdraw from the United Nations in 1971—a move some contend was a diplomatic blunder.²

Following the ROC's withdrawal from the United Nations, Taipei lost representation in numerous other institutions. Despite the fact that the ROC had participated in the WHO since the organization's founding in 1948, Taipei was forced to withdraw shortly after the UN debacle. In 1980, the ROC was forced to yield its World Bank and IMF seats to Beijing. In sum, by the early 1980s, Taiwan had been expelled from most important international organizations.³

¹For more information, see Kuo-chang Wang, *United Nations Voting on Chinese Representation: An Analysis of General Assembly Roll-Calls, 1950-1971* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1984), 11-27.

²See Julian Baum, "In Search of Recognition," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 18, 1991, 26.

³As one analyst observed, by 1980, Taiwan had been replaced in the United Nations and "in all UN specialized agencies" by the PRC. See Kay Möller, "Does Flexible Diplomacy Improve Taiwan's International Status?" in *The International Status of Taiwan in the New World Order*, ed. Jean-Marie Henckaerts (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1996), 53-54.

Phase Three

The third phase of Taiwan's participation in international organizations began when Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), then the island's president, began to promote a "pragmatic" or "flexible" approach to international relations in 1988. "Pragmatic diplomacy," as this strategy came to be known, calls for: (1) maintaining and improving relations with governments that recognize the ROC; (2) upgrading informal or "substantive" relations with governments that do not maintain formal diplomatic ties with the ROC; and (3) actively participating in international organizations.⁴ In order to accomplish these objectives, Taiwan dropped its insistence that all diplomatic contests with the PRC must be "zero-sum" games.

Thus, when attempting to join or rejoin an international body, Taiwan no longer insists on the PRC's expulsion from the institution. Moreover, Taiwan is now willing to accept membership in organizations under names other than its official designation—the ROC. Finally, Taiwan has agreed to participate in international conferences or activities conducted on the Chinese mainland.

With respect to membership in the WHO, Taiwan's Foreign Ministry has stated that the ROC might adopt a "flexible stance" toward the island's name.⁵ The island's media has speculated hopefully that the PRC eventually might agree to accept Taiwan's participation under the name "Chinese, Taipei."⁶

Understanding Taiwan's Campaign to Participate in the WHO

International organizations are often divided into two broad cate-

⁴For more information, see Government Information Office, *Pragmatic Diplomacy of the Republic of China* (Taipei: Government Information Office, June 5, 1991). For a detailed analysis of Taiwan's current approach to international relations, see Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, "U.S. Policy and Taiwan's Reintegration into the Global Community," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 18-32.

⁵See "Taiwan Says WHO Name Issue Flexible," Central News Agency (Taipei), December 10, 1999, in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, December 13, 1999, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

⁶*Ibid.*

gories—intergovernmental international organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental international organizations (NGOs).⁷ In seeking to join IGOs, Taiwan has enjoyed its greatest success when attempting to join or rejoin those with an economic focus. In 1988, Taipei resumed participation in the Asian Development Bank (ADB) under the name "Taipei, China." In 1990, Taiwan formally applied for membership to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as the representative of "The Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen, and Matsu" (Taiwan will soon enter the World Trade Organization using that designation). In 1991, the island accepted membership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum under the title "Chinese, Taipei." In 1992, Taiwan entered the South Pacific Forum using the name "Taiwan/Republic of China." Taiwan also participates, albeit "unofficially," in the Pacific Basin Economic Community (PBEC) and the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference (PECC).⁸ More recently, Taipei has sought to become a full economic dialogue partner of the ten-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and now participates as an "economy" in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).⁹

Unfortunately, Taiwan's efforts to join (or rejoin) the world's most important IGOs have met with little success. For example, the highly visible campaign to return to the United Nations has been stalled ever since the effort was launched in 1991. In September 1999, developments took a dramatic turn for the worse when the United States signaled for the first time that Washington actually *opposed* Taipei's admission to the world body. Prior to that time, Washington had kept silent on the issue whenever Tai-

⁷For more information, see Gerald Chan, *China and International Organizations* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁸The PBEC is a forum for exchanging information among business leaders in East Asia while the PECC promotes regional economic cooperation by linking scholars, businesspeople, and government officials.

⁹See "Taiwan Asks to Be Economic Dialogue Partner of ASEAN," Kyodo News Service, Japan Economic Newswire, November 16, 1998, in *Lexis/Nexis*; and U.S. Department of State, "Report on Taiwan Participation in International Organizations" (Report Required by Section 704 of the FY 2000-2001 Foreign Relations Authorization Act as enacted in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY 2000, P.L. 106-113). This report was provided to the author courtesy of the Formosan Association for Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.

wan's allies had tried to convince the United Nations to consider the island's case.¹⁰

A conjunction of factors prompted Taipei to seek to return to the United Nations. Some speculate that the campaign is driven primarily by domestic political considerations. After all, the KMT had opposed the idea until the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), then the island's chief opposition party, organized massive rallies supporting the cause in the early 1990s. High-ranking Taiwan authorities have acknowledged that important domestic political interests have been served by the drive to rejoin the United Nations.¹¹ During an interview with the author in March 2000, Chen Chien-jen (程建人), then ROC foreign minister, explained: "The majority of the people on this island support this effort [the UN drive]. No government can ignore the aspirations of its people. Otherwise, they have to face the electorate and be ousted."¹² However, do domestic political considerations also explain Taiwan's bid for WHO membership?

The WHO was established in 1948. According to the organization's charter, *all* countries may join the organization: "All countries which are members of the United Nations may become members of WHO by accepting its Constitution. Other countries may be admitted as members when their application has been approved by a simple majority vote of the World Health Assembly."¹³ This position squares nicely with the body's stated goal of "the attainment by *all peoples* of the highest possible level of health."¹⁴

In order to realize the organization's stated objective, the WHO assists governments in strengthening health services, provides aid in emergencies, and stimulates and advances work to prevent and control disease. The or-

¹⁰See Lee Siew Hua, "Strong U.S. Signal on One-China Policy," *Straits Times* (Singapore), September 18, 1999, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹¹See Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, "Taiwan's Return to International Organizations: Policies, Problems, and Prospects," in Henckaerts, *The International Status of Taiwan*, 65-78.

¹²Author's interview with Minister Chen Chien-jen, Taipei, March 31, 2000.

¹³See "About WHO: WHO Member States," available at <<http://www.who.int/aboutwho/en/mission.html>>.

¹⁴See "About WHO: Mission Statement," available at <<http://www.who.int/aboutwho/en/mission.html>>. Emphasis added.

ganization also promotes and coordinates biomedical and health services research; establishes international standards for biological, pharmaceutical, and similar products; and acts as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work. These are only some of the WHO's chief responsibilities. A more complete discussion would include details about numerous other functions as well.

In 1997, Taiwan began to seek admission to the WHO as an observer. Since that time, a proposal entitled "Inviting the Republic of China (Taiwan) to Participate in the WHO as an Observer" has been submitted to the steering committee of the World Health Assembly on an annual basis for consideration. In 1999, two of Taiwan's "little friends"—Honduras and Burkina Faso—raised the issue.¹⁵ More recently, in May 2000, three states—Honduras, Burkina Faso, and the Solomon Islands—sponsored the proposal.¹⁶ Several others spoke in favor of Taiwan's membership in the international organization.

It is noteworthy that the election of Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁)—the first opposition candidate to win the presidency in the history of the ROC—has not weakened the government's determination to enter the WHO. Indeed, the new president is dedicated to securing Taiwan a voice in the organization. Tien Hung-mao (田弘茂), ROC foreign minister, explains the government's position: "Since this case greatly affects the personal health, public health, and national interests of our people, my ministry has mapped out mid- and long-term work plans to promote our case in European and North American countries. We will continue to urge the participation of the civilian sector in the WHO bid campaign."¹⁷

Unlike the UN campaign, the WHO drive has not been politicized by Taiwan's political parties. Popular demonstrations did not galvanize public

¹⁵Bear Lee, "Taiwan's WHO Bid Again Aborted," Central News Agency, May 17, 1999, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁶See "Taiwan Seeks Observer Status in the World Health Organization," Associated Press, May 3, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

¹⁷See "The Current State of ROC Diplomacy: An Abridgment of the Report by Foreign Minister Dr. Hung-mao Tien to the Foreign and Overseas Chinese Affairs Committees, Legislative Yuan" (June 5, 2000), available at <<http://www.mofa.gov.tw/emofa/emofa8965.html>>.

opinion on this issue or prompt the government to pursue participation in the organization. Although admission to the WHO undoubtedly would serve important domestic political interests, the realization that the island's admission makes sense as a matter of public health policy appears to be the driving force behind this crusade. In fact, it was the 1999 Taiwan earthquake that really energized the WHO campaign. More than 2,400 people perished in the disaster and roughly 10,000 people were injured. The earthquake also left 100,000 of the island's inhabitants homeless.

A strong case may be made that Taiwan deserves to participate in the WHO. At a minimum, one may suggest that the island's exclusion is a violation of the organization's stated goal of "the attainment by *all peoples* of the highest possible level of health." Several other arguments may also be advanced:

- * Taiwanese health officials and medical professionals experience great difficulties when attempting to take part in WHO meetings or workshops concerning issues related to public health.
- * Because of the exclusion from WHO forums and workshops, Taiwan experiences difficulties developing health care policies and learning about the latest advances in medical science.
- * Being excluded from the WHO, Taiwan is ineligible for assistance should the island suffer an outbreak of disease.
- * When epidemics break out in other countries, WHO does not share information about the disease with Taiwan. In 1998, this contributed to the deaths of more than fifty Taiwanese children when an outbreak of a virulent strain of enterovirus type 71 spread from Malaysia to Taiwan.
- * When a disaster like the 1999 earthquake strikes Taiwan, WHO assistance is delayed as the organization attempts to seek out "unofficial" and "indirect" ways to offer assistance.
- * The high frequency of international travel has increased the risk of transmitting infectious diseases. Taiwan's exclusion from the WHO compromises the public health of all of the island's neighbors and every country Taiwanese choose to visit. For example, since the opening up of travel links to China, Taiwanese com-

patriots have made more than two million visits to the mainland.

- * With one of the highest life expectancy levels in Asia and the eradication of many infectious diseases, Taiwan has much to offer the international community in aid and health cooperation. It is noteworthy that Taiwan was the first Asian country to rid itself of polio and also the first in the world to provide children with free hepatitis B vaccinations.

For these reasons, a growing number of medical professionals agree that locking Taiwan out of the WHO makes no sense. For example, *Lancet*, the prestigious British medical journal, declared support for Taiwan's participation in WHO in December 1999.¹⁸

Overcoming Obstacles

A strong case may be made that Taiwan deserves to participate actively in the WHO. So, why would any country object to Taiwan's membership? What hurdles must Taipei overcome to return to this organization? As with any new initiative, many interested parties have raised questions.

To be sure, the PRC is the chief obstacle to Taiwan's participation in the WHO. Beijing fails to distinguish between Taipei's drive to participate in the WHO and the crusade to return to the United Nations, the campaign to upgrade "unofficial relations" with foreign countries or any of the other efforts to "increase Taiwan's living space."

Whenever Taiwan's friends ask that the WHO steering committee consider the island's case for observer status, the PRC objects strenuously. For example, when the issue was raised in May 1999, the Chinese representative declared that the WHO application was part of Taipei's "plot" to "brazenly divide China."¹⁹ He added that since Taiwan is part of China and

¹⁸See "Taiwan: Time to End the Exile," *Lancet* 353, no. 9196 (December 18-25, 1999): 2093.

¹⁹See "China Revels in Taiwan Failure to Join World Health Organization," *Zhongguo Tong-*

the mainland is concerned about the health of the Taiwanese, "on WHO issues, Taiwan can submit [its concerns] to the central authorities."²⁰ Yang Jiechi (楊潔篪), China's vice-minister of foreign affairs, warned that the United States and other countries must "never support Taiwan's entry into the WHO" or be prepared for "serious consequences" if they do.²¹ Similar arguments were employed in May 2000. At that time, Zhang Qiyue (章啟月), a PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, declared that "as a province of China, Taiwan is not qualified to participate in World Health Organization activities, nor is it in any position to attend the World Health Assembly in whatever name."²² Zhang blasted Taipei's drive to join the organization as an attempt to create "two Chinas or one China, one Taiwan."²³

In order to block Taipei's WHO application, Beijing employs its muscle. The Chinese delegation to the World Health Assembly contends that the Taiwan representation question in the United Nations and all of its affiliated organizations (including the WHO) was resolved when the world body adopted UN Resolution 2758 in 1971. This measure—described by a former U.S. official as "highly unusual" and "unprecedented"—authorized a shift in representation for China.²⁴ Beijing's position is that Resolution 2758 means the PRC represents all of China—including Taiwan—and Beijing will not hesitate to punish any state that dares to challenge this policy.²⁵ This may help explain why, in part, the World Health Assembly's

xunshu (Hong Kong), March 18, 1999, in *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, May 22, 1999, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"China Lodges Strong Protest on U.S. Support of Taiwan for WHO Entry," Xinhua News Agency, December 10, 1999, in *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, December 13, 1999, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

²²"Taiwan Not Qualified to Participate in WHO Activities: Spokeswoman," Xinhua General News Service, May 16, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

²³Ibid.

²⁴See prepared statement of John R. Bolton, former assistant secretary of state for international organizations, in *Should Taiwan Be Admitted to the United Nations?* (Joint Hearing Before the Subcommittees on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights, and Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 2nd Session, July 14, 1994) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994), 78.

²⁵Interestingly, Beijing ignores the fact that Taiwan continued to participate in the World Bank and IMF for nine years after the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 2758. This

steering committee spent only twenty minutes discussing the issue before deciding not to include the issue on the agenda of the assembly's annual session in May 2000.

China's opposition to Taiwan's WHO application is only part of the equation. There also exists a disturbing propensity for the international community to cave in to Beijing's threats and exclude Taiwan from the WHO and other international organizations. Only a small number of states—governments hoping to curry favor with Beijing—openly champion the PRC stance on the Taiwan question.²⁶ Much more common is a tendency for states to remain quiet and hope to avoid the issue.

With respect to U.S. policy, Washington will not support Taipei's membership in international organizations where statehood is an issue. Lest there be any misunderstanding on this matter, President Bill Clinton declared publicly that this position is a cornerstone of American policy while visiting Shanghai, China, in 1998. During a carefully orchestrated question and answer session, President Clinton declared that "we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member in any organization for which statehood is a requirement." The Department of State also has clearly stated that "the Administration does *not* support Taiwan's becoming a member of the WHO."²⁷ At the same time, however, the United States steadfastly supports Taiwan "gaining a voice" in such organizations. This position was outlined in the Clinton administration's Taiwan policy review of 1994.²⁸ Moreover, in December 1999, President Clinton signed into law a bill declaring that the United States would support Taiwan's "meaningful

shows that a state does not have to be a member of the UN General Assembly to participate in UN-affiliated organizations.

²⁶WHO members speaking in opposition to Taiwan's membership in May 2000 include Russia, Pakistan, Cuba, Uruguay, Bangladesh, and Cape Verde. See "Taiwan's Fourth Bid for World Health Organization Membership Rejected," Central News Agency, May 18, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*. Motivations for such support vary. Some states may receive economic aid (Uruguay and Cape Verde) while others receive military support (Pakistan). It is likely that a conjunction of factors led Moscow to support Beijing's position on the WHO question.

²⁷U.S. Department of State, "Taiwan Participation in the World Health Organization: Report Required by Public Law 106-137, Fiscal Year 2000," available at <<http://www.fapa.org/update/who/TW-PRO105.html>>. Emphasis added.

²⁸For more information, see "Taiwan Policy Review," *Department of State Dispatch* 5, no. 42 (October 17, 1994): 11.

participation" in the WHO.

Thus far, Washington has adopted what some describe as a "low-key" approach toward Taiwan's participation in the WHO. The Department of State insists that it is trying to help the island, but that such efforts are being "hurdled by adamant opposition from Beijing."²⁹ The department has taken a number of steps "including frequent consultation with Taiwan authorities on modalities for participation in WHO activities; encouraging Taiwan's nongovernment organizations and medical community to explore the possibilities of participating in WHO activities through international nongovernmental organizations; and urging the WHO Secretariat to find appropriate ways for Taiwan to benefit from and contribute to the work of WHO."³⁰ The Department of State has also "proposed to the PRC, Taiwan, and the WHO Secretariat that Taiwan health experts and physicians be invited to attend WHO expert meetings and conferences in their professional capacity."³¹ James Foley, deputy spokesman for the Department of State, has stressed that the U.S. position is that "the people of Taiwan should be able to contribute to, as well as benefit from, the work of the WHO."³²

Critics charge that the State Department is kowtowing to Beijing and appears to be more interested in explaining why China objects to Taiwan's participation in the WHO rather than doing anything concrete to promote Taiwan's cause.³³ As one Taiwanese-American group complained, the Department of State "makes the United States look like a child unable to speak up to the PRC."³⁴ The organization demands that the department "take a more proactive position and not roll over and play dead because of what Beijing thinks."³⁵ Members of the U.S. Congress have voiced similar concerns. Consequently, Rep. Sherrod Brown (Democrat-Ohio) has intro-

²⁹See Jay Chen and Sofia Wu, "U.S. Promises to Seek Way for Taiwan's Voice Heard in WHO," Central News Agency, January 6, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

³⁰*Ibid.*; see also note 27 above.

³¹See note 27 above.

³²See note 29 above.

³³See Jay Chen and Maubo Chang, "Taiwanese Group in Washington Blasts State Department," Central News Agency, January 6, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*

Table 1
Top Contributing Nations to the World Health Organization by Percentage Contributed, 2000-2001

Country	Percent of WHO Budget
1. United States	25.0
2. Japan	20.0
3. Germany	9.7
4. France	6.4
5. Italy	5.3
6. United Kingdom	5.0
7. Canada	2.7
8. Spain	2.5
9. Brazil	1.4
10. Switzerland	1.2

Source: Information provided courtesy of Ms. C. Modis, Reference Services, World Health Organization Library, October 4, 2000.

duced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that would require the United States to actively support observer status for Taiwan in the WHO.³⁶

The United States probably could do more to help Taiwan. Unlike the United Nations, Beijing cannot blackball Taiwan's application for membership in the WHO. For admission, Taipei requires only a simple majority vote of the 191-member World Health Assembly. Working with its friends and allies, Washington could use its leverage to increase support for some sort of formula that would allow the island to participate in WHO activities. After all, the developed countries provide this IGO with the lion's share of its financial support (see table 1). For example, Washington consistently provides roughly 25 percent of the WHO's annual budget (see table 2) and also is the largest contributor of extrabudgetary program funds, providing US\$46.1 million (mostly from the Agency for International Development).³⁷

³⁶See Jay Chen and Maubo Chang, "U.S. Congressman Puts Forward Bill Favoring Taiwan's WHO Entry," Central News Agency, March 15, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

³⁷See Bureau of International Organizational Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "United States Participation in the United Nations: A Report by the President to the Congress for the Year 1999," 123; available at <<http://www.state.gov/www/issues/unpart/1998/index.html>>.

Table 2
U.S. Contributions to the WHO, FY 1996-98

Year	Amount	U.S. Contribution by Percentage
1996	US\$97,318,920	25.00
1997	US\$87,094,000	25.00
1998	US\$106,864,197	25.00

Source: "United States Contributions to International Organizations" (Reports to the Congress for Fiscal Years 1996, 1997, and 1998), Released by the Bureau of International Organizational Affairs, U.S. Department of State, September 2000, available at <http://www.state.gov/www/issues/us_contribs_io/fy98_index.html>.

By contrast, China provides less than one percent of the WHO's budget. Moreover, there is ample precedent of the United States using this clout to shape WHO policies in the past. For example, Washington successfully blocked the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO's) bid to join the WHO by threatening to withhold contributions in 1989 (the United States ultimately acquiesced to the PLO's participation as an observer).³⁸ It is also noteworthy that a high proportion of the most important positions in the WHO traditionally are occupied by Americans.³⁹

Most states acquiesce to Beijing's position and adopt the stance that Taiwan cannot join the WHO because of a lack of "country" status. Therefore, Washington should seek to persuade others to support Taipei's "participation" as an observer. At the present time, several "non-state" actors participate in the organization as observers.⁴⁰ Others—including Puerto Rico and Tokelau—participate as "associate members." Certainly there must be room for Taiwan in the WHO. Member-states should be reminded that, while the World Health Assembly strives to achieve a consensus on matters relating to participation as an observer or otherwise, such consensus is not a requirement.

³⁸See Karen A. Mingst, "The United States and the World Health Organization," in *The United States and Multilateral Institutions*, ed. Margaret P. Karns and Karen A. Mingst (London: Routledge, 1992), 224.

³⁹According to official U.S. government accounts, "within the WHO staff, there are more American citizens in professional posts than any other nationality." See "United States Participation in the United Nations," 120.

⁴⁰These "non-state" observers include Liechtenstein, Palestine, Vatican City, and Order of Malta. See notes 16 and 27 above.

The Director-General of the WHO has the power to invite Taiwanese health officials to meetings of the World Health Assembly.⁴¹ According to an official Department of State report, "in the early 1950s, when the World Health Assembly was held in Rome, the WHO's Director-General invited the Vatican and the Order of Malta to attend the WHA as observers. Since then, representatives of both have continued to attend meetings as observers."⁴² The study also cautions, however, that in more recent years, "observer status has been authorized by affirmative decisions of the World Health Assembly, not by the Director-General."⁴³

The United States might also use quiet diplomacy to reduce PRC resistance to Taiwan's participation in the WHO. Washington should remind Beijing that the United States has not blocked the WHO from helping countries unfriendly to the United States—including Cuba. Health considerations should take precedence over political considerations. It is in every government's interest that all countries, friend or foe, are allowed to participate in the WHO. Moreover, the PRC might be reminded that China's "strangulation policy" is not winning the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people.⁴⁴ Rather, public opinion polls have consistently revealed that Beijing's hostile tactics are counterproductive and only increase popular support for de jure independence from China.

In addition to these American actions, there are some moves that Taipei might consider to further advance this cause. As a first step, the island should avoid provoking the PRC. Junking the so-called "one China" policy in July 1999 did little to relax cross-Strait tensions or increase Taiwan's international profile in a positive way. Indeed, many suspect that Lee Teng-hui's unilateral redefinition of cross-Strait relations was what prompted the Clinton administration to publicly oppose Taipei's UN bid. It

⁴¹See testimony of Harvey Feldman, Senior Fellow, Asia Studies Center, Heritage Foundation in "Panel II of a Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations, Subject, U.S.-Taiwan Relations," Federal News Service, March 25, 1999, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

⁴²See note 27 above.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Dr. David Lampton, Director of China Studies, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, made this observation when testifying before Congress in March 1999. For more information, see note 41 above.

is difficult for Washington and other governments to argue that Taiwan's joining international organizations does not reflect a move away from China when the island's politicians are making separatist noises. President Chen Shui-bian's recent efforts to distance himself from Lee's "two states" theory may prove helpful in this respect. He might consider making other moves in exchange for some concessions from Beijing—including PRC support for Taiwan as an observer in the WHO. For example, Taipei might offer to ease travel restrictions that strictly limit visits by mainland tourists to Taiwan. Some even have suggested that the ROC accede to the PRC's demands for "the three links" (direct trade, travel, and communications) "in exchange for more flexibility in providing a dignified role for Taiwan, whether it's in the World Health Organization, the World Health Assembly, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, [or] the International Monetary Fund."⁴⁵

The Taiwan government also should heed the advice of the U.S. Department of State and become more active in NGOs—particularly those that maintain strong ties with the WHO. There are several reasons for such a policy. First, the WHO consults and cooperates with over fifty NGOs in carrying out its health work. In most instances, the PRC does not seek to block Taipei's membership in NGOs. This opens a window of opportunity for Taipei. Once inside the NGOs, Taiwan may reap some of the benefits of WHO programs. Second, and perhaps equally important, is the possibility that these organizations might throw their support to Taiwan's cause after they become familiar with the island's predicament. NGOs could ultimately prove to be powerful allies that pressure both governments and IGOs to support Taiwan's full-fledged participation in the WHO. After all, NGOs played a critical role in pressuring many governments to agree to ban landmines.⁴⁶ They could play a similar role in Taiwan's drive to enter the WHO. Unfortunately, this fact appears to have been overlooked by some officials in Taipei. Third, when seeking NGO support, Taiwan should

⁴⁵See testimony of Dr. David Lampton. Ibid.

⁴⁶For more information, see Ken Rutherford, "The Hague and Ottawa Conventions: A Model for Future Weapon Ban Regimes?" *The Nonproliferation Review* 6, no. 3 (Spring-Summer 1999): 36-50.

not overlook those based in the PRC. Members of the Chinese Medical Association and other related groups should be invited to Taipei to attend medical meetings and conferences related to health issues on a regular basis. Taiwanese medical professionals could use such occasions to approach their mainland counterparts and present the island's case to them. As incredible as it may seem, Taiwan might ultimately line up some support within the PRC medical community for its participation in the WHO. Such an approach is worth a try.

On a final note, Taiwan should continue to stress that the island is not seeking to join the WHO as a full-fledged member but rather hopes only to participate as an observer. Taipei should formally propose participation under the Olympic formula—as "Chinese, Taipei." These moves might help assuage PRC suspicions that the WHO campaign is simply another Taiwanese trick to inch the island closer to independence from China.

Conclusion

Chinese officials claim that, since the WHO is a specialized agency of the United Nations, "only sovereign states are entitled to become its members and participate in its activities."⁴⁷ Despite PRC protestations to the contrary, it is clear that the ROC on Taiwan is a sovereign state and, as such, should be allowed to join the WHO. A brief review of three core concepts in international relations—sovereignty, the state, and the nation—might help underscore this fact.

The idea of *sovereignty* was one of the most important intellectual developments that led to the Westphalian revolution. According to Jean Bodin (1530-96), the French philosopher who contributed much to the development of the concept, sovereignty is the "absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth."⁴⁸ Sovereignty is "the distinguishing mark of the sovereign that he cannot in any way be subject to the com-

⁴⁷See note 22 above.

⁴⁸Jean Bodin, *Six Books on the Commonwealth* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 25.

Table 3
Nations Having Diplomatic Relations with Taiwan, February 2000

Belize	Marshall Islands
Chad	Nauru
Costa Rica	Nicaragua
Dominican Republic	Panama
Dominica	Paraguay
El Salvador	Saint Christopher
Burkina Faso	Saint Vincent
Gambia	Sao Tome
Grenada	Senegal
Guatemala	Solomon Islands
Haiti	Swaziland
Holy See	Tuvalu
Honduras	Palau
Liberia	Macedonia
Malawi	

Source: ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the world wide web at <<http://www.mofa.gov.tw/emofa/embassy2.html>>.

mands of another, for it is he who makes law for the subject, abrogates law already made, and amends law."⁴⁹ Sovereignty resides in the *state*—a body that exercises predominant authority within its geographic borders, possesses a relatively stable population that owes its allegiance to a government, and maintains diplomatic ties with other states. A state differs from a nation. A *nation* refers to a group of people with a shared sense of identity, often based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, language, history, or culture. Consequently, it is possible for two or more states to reside within one nation, or for a nation to exist within two or more states.

The Republic of China exercises predominant authority within its borders, possesses a relatively stable population that owes allegiance to the ROC government, and maintains formal diplomatic ties with roughly thirty "little friends" (see table 3) and strong "unofficial" links with many others. Therefore, it is obvious that the ROC does exist and meets all the requirements of statehood. Bau Tzong-Ho (包宗和), then chair of the Political

⁴⁹Ibid., 28.

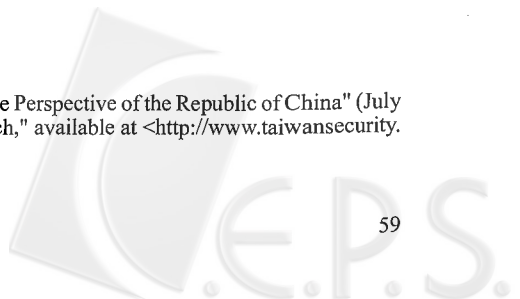
Science Department at Taipei's prestigious National Taiwan University, explains: "The problem is that the ROC never lost its conditions as a sovereign state even if the territory of it shrunk after 1949. The ROC continues to maintain its territory, people, government, and ability to deal with foreign countries. In other words, the existence of the ROC is a political reality."⁵⁰ Other arguments employed by Beijing, including the suggestion that the ROC cannot exist because it is no longer a member of the United Nations, are similarly flawed. According to this logic, the PRC has existed only since 1971 (when it gained admission to the UN) and Switzerland has never existed.

As a sovereign independent state, Taiwan has a right to conduct foreign relations, exchange diplomats with other countries, and join international organizations—including the WHO. In fact, the island's right to participate in the global community is indisputable. Unlike most states, however, Taiwan confronts a rigid and increasingly powerful opponent determined to block its participation in the global community. The realities of international politics dictate that Taipei must adopt an unusual approach to foreign relations at this time.

Taiwan has launched an aggressive campaign to return to the WHO, albeit only as an observer. The island's case is a strong one. The WHO claims to support "health for all." A more accurate slogan, however, might be "health for all—except the Taiwanese." After all, the bizarre politics of the WHO contributed to the deaths of over fifty innocent children in 1998 and greatly complicated international efforts to aid Taiwan after a massive earthquake hit the island the following year.

Given the fact that it is in Washington's best interest to maintain constructive, working relations with both Taipei and Beijing, there must be some practical limits on the level of American support for Taiwan's participation in international organizations. For example, the United States should *not* support the island's quixotic drive to return to the United Na-

⁵⁰Bau Tzong-Ho, "Cross-Strait Relations from the Perspective of the Republic of China" (July 1998), in the project "Taiwan Security Research," available at <<http://www.taiwansecurity.org/T5-Bau-2-html>>.



tions.⁵¹ Having a seat on the UN Security Council, Beijing is in a position to block Taipei's entry into the world body as a full member, an observer, or in any other capacity. However, the WHO is a different case entirely and it would be unreasonable for the United States to sanction Beijing's inane position that Taiwan cannot participate in the organization. Consequently, Washington should accelerate efforts to help find a way for Taiwan's voice to be heard in the WHO.

Increased international support is only part of the answer. Taiwan must do more to help itself. If it is serious about the WHO campaign, Taipei should expend more time, energy, and resources on the WHO drive and less on the UN bid. Thus far, the UN campaign has succeeded only in provoking China. As described, Taipei also might consider making some modest concessions in cross-Strait relations in exchange for Beijing's support for observer status in the WHO. Finally, Taiwan should seek out membership in NGOs that have close links to the WHO and cultivate support among their members. This includes developing closer ties with health-related groups based in mainland China. Taipei must realize that the road to membership in the WHO and other IGOs runs through Beijing, as well as Washington.

Over the past five decades, the WHO has become the foremost IGO working to control and eradicate disease and improve the health of all the world's people. Within the global community, a consensus has emerged gradually that good health is a basic right for every person. Now is the time for the world to recognize that denying Taiwan the opportunity to participate in the WHO is an unjustifiable violation of the Taiwanese people's fundamental human rights. As one Czech lawmaker observed, "the problem of health goes beyond political interests . . . this country with 20 million inhabitants should not be discriminated against."⁵² Indeed, only after Taiwan is allowed to participate in the WHO will the organization truly merit the title, *World Health Organization*.

⁵¹For more information, see Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, "U.S. Policy and Taiwan's Bid to Rejoin the United Nations," *Asian Survey* 37, no. 11 (November 1997): 1031-43.

⁵²"Czech Deputies Want Taiwan to be Observer at WHO," Czech News Agency National News Wire, February 2, 2000, in *Lexis/Nexis*.