

WHY THE WORLD CAN'T AFFORD TO KEEP TAIWAN OUT OF INTERPOL

Brian Iselin



Taiwan's exclusion from the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) presents a critical gap in the global effort to combat transnational crime. As criminal networks become more sophisticated, particularly in areas such as cybercrime, human trafficking, and terrorism, seamless international cooperation is essential. Despite Taiwan's strategic importance in the Asia-Pacific region and its advanced law enforcement capabilities, it remains excluded from Interpol's systems, creating a vulnerability in the global security framework. Without access to Interpol's I-24/7 communications system, Taiwan cannot engage in real-time information exchanges crucial for tracking criminal activity, which hampers its ability to combat transnational threats effectively. Taiwan's geographic position at the crossroads of many illicit activities, combined with its exclusion from Interpol, weakens the global law enforcement response. Taiwan's observer status in Interpol would not only benefit its own security efforts but also strengthen international crime-fighting capabilities. The push for Taiwan's inclusion has gained momentum in recent years, with legislative efforts and diplomatic campaigns from countries like the United States, Japan, and members of the European Union. Recent efforts have also focused on revisiting the misuse of UN Resolution 2758, which has often been wrongly interpreted to exclude Taiwan from international organizations. Could correcting this misinterpretation open the door for Taiwan's participation in specialized agencies like Interpol at the next Interpol General Assembly?

Policy Recommendations

1. **Advocate for Taiwan's Observer Status:** Like-minded nations should advocate for Taiwan's observer status at Interpol, granting it access to critical communication systems for sharing criminal intelligence.
2. **Strengthen Diplomatic Pressure on China:** Diplomatic pressure must be applied to China, emphasizing how Taiwan's exclusion undermines global security efforts.
3. **Encourage Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation:** Until Taiwan's observer status is secured, nations should continue strengthening cooperation with Taiwan on law enforcement issues.
4. **Promote Public Awareness:** Launch public campaigns to highlight the negative impact of Taiwan's exclusion from Interpol on global security.
5. **Advocate for Transparent Leadership Elections:** Push for greater transparency in Interpol's leadership elections to minimize geopolitical influences that hinder decisions on Taiwan's observer status.
6. **Revisit the Interpretation of UN Resolution 2758:** Advocate for a reassessment of UN Resolution 2758, clarifying that it does not preclude Taiwan's participation in specialized agencies like Interpol.

Introduction

Taiwan's exclusion from the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) represents a critical gap in the global security framework, particularly in the fight against transnational crime. As criminal networks become more sophisticated and international in scope, cooperation between law enforcement agencies worldwide has become essential. Interpol facilitates this cooperation through the exchange of criminal intelligence and real-time responses to global threats. However, despite Taiwan's strategic importance in the Asia-Pacific region and its advanced capabilities in combating cybercrime, human trafficking, and other international crimes, and despite it having been an original member, it remains excluded from Interpol's network.

This exclusion is not merely a matter of diplomatic politics; it has tangible and detrimental effects on global security. Taiwan's geographic location places it at the intersection of numerous illicit activities, making its exclusion from Interpol a liability for law enforcement efforts worldwide. To be clear, Taiwan's exclusion harms us all. Without access to Interpol's I-24/7 communications system, Taiwan is denied real-time access to critical

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criminal databases, severely hampering its ability to share and receive vital intelligence that could combat these threats. Furthermore, Taiwan's exclusion disrupts regional security, especially in the Asia-Pacific, where crime networks exploit the information gaps created by Taiwan's absence.

As the 2024 Interpol General Assembly approaches in mere days, the international community faces a moment, perhaps an opportunity, to address this issue. Taiwan's inclusion as, at a minimum, an observer State, would allow it to contribute its expertise and resources to the global fight against crime while benefiting from Interpol's collaborative frameworks. Revisiting the misuse of UN Resolution 2758, which has often been wrongly interpreted to exclude Taiwan, could open new legal pathways for its inclusion.

This policy brief outlines the history of Taiwan's exclusion, the efforts to reverse this situation, and the pressing need for the international community to support Taiwan's bid for observer status within Interpol. The time has come for the world to recognize that Taiwan's participation is not just a regional concern—it is essential for global security.

Background: Taiwan's Exclusion from Interpol

Taiwan's relationship with Interpol has been heavily influenced by global political developments, particularly in relation to China. Below are the key points explaining this somewhat complex history:

- 1. Early Membership:**
 - Taiwan became an original member of Interpol in 1961, during a time when many countries recognized the Republic of China (Taiwan) as the legitimate government of China.¹
 - Taiwan actively participated in international law enforcement cooperation through Interpol during this period.
- 2. UN Resolution 2758 (1971):**
 - In 1971, the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 2758, transferring recognition of the word "China" from the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China (PRC).
 - This misinterpretation of the Resolution marked

the beginning of Taiwan's exclusion from numerous international organizations, including Interpol.²

3. **Loss of Interpol Membership (1984):**

- Taiwan officially lost its membership in Interpol in 1984 when the organization recognized the PRC as the sole representative of "China" under the one-China policy.³
- Since then, Taiwan has been unable to access critical Interpol systems like the I-24/7 communications network and its global criminal database.

4. **China's Opposition:**

- The People's Republic of China has consistently blocked Taiwan's attempts to rejoin Interpol, even in a non-member observer capacity.
- China's stance is grounded in its view that Taiwan is part of its territory, and it has used its diplomatic and economic power to prevent Taiwan from joining global forums.⁴

5. **Taiwan's Current Challenges:**

- **Indirect Cooperation:** Taiwan relies on informal and bilateral agreements with law enforcement agencies in countries like the United States, Japan, and parts of Europe.⁵
- **Lack of Access:** Taiwan is unable to utilize Interpol's real-time information-sharing system, causing delays in tracking criminal activities. This is particularly problematic in cases of cybercrime, human trafficking, and narcotics smuggling.⁶
- **Regional Security Gaps:** Taiwan's exclusion from Interpol weakens regional security efforts, especially in the Asia-Pacific, which is a hub for transnational crime.⁷

6. **International Calls for Taiwan's Inclusion:**

- In recent years, there has been growing international support for Taiwan to at least receive observer status in Interpol. Numerous Western countries have become especially vocal about revisiting UN Resolution 2758 (see below in "Efforts to Reverse Taiwan's Exclusion"), and many have passed resolutions that should provide a springboard to revisiting Taiwan's Interpol participation.⁸

7. **Challenges Remain:**

- **China's Opposition:** China remains the single most powerful obstacle to Taiwan's inclusion in Interpol. Its diplomatic and economic leverage is used to block Taiwan's participation in global bodies, grounded in its "One China" policy, which considers Taiwan a part of its territory.⁹
- **Geopolitical Complexities:** Taiwan's international status is further complicated by the misuse of UN Resolution 2758, which addresses China's representation at the UN but has been used to prevent Taiwan's participation in other global organizations, including Interpol.¹⁰
- **Influence of BRICS:** The growing influence of China-aligned nations such as the UAE (current Interpol President) and Brazil (upcoming Secretary-General) within Interpol leadership complicates efforts to push Taiwan's inclusion. BRICS countries often cooperate with China on global governance issues, reducing Taiwan's prospects.¹¹
- **International Hesitancy:** Although many large countries have expressed support for Taiwan's inclusion, many smaller countries, while supporting Taiwan diplomatically, hesitate to confront China directly due to concerns about potential economic or political retaliation. This reluctance weakens collective efforts to secure Taiwan's participation in international organizations.¹²

The Case for Taiwan's Inclusion

• **Global Security Implications**

Taiwan's exclusion from Interpol weakens the international response to transnational crime. The lack of direct access to real-time criminal intelligence hampers Taiwan's ability to combat human trafficking, terrorism, and cybercrime effectively. Taiwan has demonstrated its capacity for combatting international crimes through its effective local enforcement and collaborations with foreign agencies, yet the lack of formal inclusion in Interpol denies it access to vital information networks.¹³

• **Taiwan's Law Enforcement Capabilities**

Taiwan is recognized for its advanced capabilities

in areas such as digital forensics, cybersecurity, and combating human trafficking. As a tier-one country in anti-trafficking efforts, Taiwan ranks among the highest globally in its ability to identify and prosecute trafficking networks. Including Taiwan in Interpol would enhance global efforts in cracking down on international crime syndicates that exploit the lack of information exchange with Taiwan.¹⁴

- **Growing International Support**

The campaign to include Taiwan in Interpol has gained momentum in recent years. In 2021, over 60 countries expressed support for Taiwan's bid to attend Interpol meetings as an observer. Political leaders from the United States, Europe, and Asia have increasingly recognized the potential risks of excluding Taiwan. In addition, several legislative efforts in the United States, such as bills mandating the State Department to strategize Taiwan's Interpol membership, reflect a growing recognition of the need for Taiwan's inclusion.¹⁵

- **Security Gaps in the Asia-Pacific Region**

The Asia-Pacific is a major hub for various transnational crimes, such as human trafficking, narcotics smuggling, and cybercrime. Taiwan's strategic location places it in the middle of these illegal activities, yet its exclusion from Interpol's data-sharing network means that gaps exist in the real-time tracking of criminals. Taiwan has successfully collaborated with other nations in the region on a bilateral basis, but without access to Interpol's databases, this cooperation is often delayed or incomplete.¹⁶

Efforts to Reverse Taiwan's Exclusion

Numerous international actors have made sustained efforts to support Taiwan's participation in Interpol, even if only as an observer for the moment. These initiatives have come from a variety of fronts, including legislative actions, diplomatic campaigns, and recent discussions around the reinterpretation of UN Resolution 2758.

- **U.S. Congressional Action:**

- The United States has been one of Taiwan's most vocal supporters in its push for inclusion in international organizations. In recent years, multiple bipartisan bills have been introduced in Congress advocating for Taiwan's

participation in Interpol. Notably, Public Law 114-139, enacted on March 18, 2016, directs the Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status for Taiwan in the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) and at other related meetings. This legislation emphasizes that Taiwan's exclusion prevents it from accessing crucial real-time information on criminal activities, thereby leaving a significant void in global crime-fighting efforts.¹⁷

- In November 2021, Congressman John Curtis led a bipartisan effort involving over 70 members of Congress to support Taiwan's inclusion in Interpol. In a letter to key officials, including Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Curtis articulated that there is clear Congressional intent for the U.S. to support Taiwan's inclusion, highlighting that Taiwan deserves a seat at the table to collaborate with democratic partners in combating global crime.¹⁸
- The U.S. State Department has been mandated to work closely with international allies to ensure that Taiwan's observer status is seriously considered at future Interpol General Assemblies. This reflects a growing recognition among U.S. lawmakers of the importance of Taiwan's participation in enhancing global security networks, particularly in the fight against cybercrime and human trafficking.¹⁹

- **European Union and Other Allies:**

- In Europe, various legislative bodies have passed resolutions urging Interpol to accept Taiwan as an observer. Italian senators, for instance, have petitioned the organization directly, highlighting the significant contributions Taiwan can make to global security if included.²⁰
- Other democratic nations such as Japan, Australia, and Canada have joined these calls, urging international law enforcement networks to reconsider Taiwan's exclusion. These countries argue that excluding Taiwan creates significant security gaps, particularly in areas like human trafficking and cybercrime, where Taiwan has demonstrated strong capabilities.²¹

- **Taiwan's Diplomatic Campaign:**

- Taiwan has been proactive in its diplomatic efforts, continually raising the issue of its exclusion from Interpol on international platforms. Taiwan's government has engaged in numerous diplomatic initiatives, seeking the support of like-minded democratic nations.²²
- By emphasizing its proven law enforcement record and commitment to combating transnational crime, Taiwan has sought to showcase its value as a partner to the international community.²³ Although these efforts have not yet resulted in Taiwan's formal participation in Interpol, they have increased global awareness of the issue and helped build a broader base of international support for its inclusion.²⁴

- **Revisiting UN Resolution 2758:**

- A new front in the campaign to reverse Taiwan's exclusion focuses on challenging the misuse of UN Resolution 2758, the resolution frequently cited by China to block Taiwan's participation in international organizations. The resolution, passed in 1971, transferred the seat of "China" in the UN from the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China (PRC). However, this resolution does not explicitly cover Taiwan's participation in specialized agencies such as Interpol.²⁵
- Recently, there have been growing efforts, particularly from U.S. and European lawmakers to correct this misinterpretation of Resolution 2758 (3). By clarifying that the resolution only pertains to UN representation and not to Taiwan's ability to participate in specialized agencies, proponents argue that Taiwan's exclusion from organizations like Interpol is not legally justified.²⁶
 - In a resolution passed on December 13, 2023, the European Parliament strongly opposed China's ongoing distortion of the resolution, which has been used to block Taiwan's participation in international organizations. The European Parliament's resolution calls out the fact that Resolution 2758, passed in 1971, only deals with the representation of China at the UN and does not address Taiwan's status.²⁷
 - In August 2024, the Australian Senate

passed a motion addressing the misuse of UN Resolution 2758, which China has long cited to block Taiwan from participating in international organizations. The motion clarified that the resolution, adopted in 1971, does not establish China's sovereignty over Taiwan nor determine Taiwan's participation in the UN or other global bodies like Interpol.²⁸

- The United States has taken a firm stance against China's misuse of UN Resolution 2758 regarding Taiwan's participation in international organizations. Most recently, the Taiwan International Solidarity Act was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in May 2023. This legislation directly counters China's interpretation of Resolution 2758. The U.S. bill clarifies that the resolution only addresses China's representation in the UN and has no bearing on Taiwan's status or its ability to participate in international organizations.²⁹
- The UK has taken a firm stance on China's misuse of UN Resolution 2758. In 2023, the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the UK Parliament released a report stating that Taiwan already operates as an independent country under the name "Republic of China." This marks a clear opposition to China's claim that Resolution 2758 justifies Taiwan's exclusion from global institutions.³⁰
- Other democratic nations like Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany have also taken steps to challenge China's misinterpretation of the resolution. In September 2024, the Dutch Parliament passed a motion explicitly rejecting China's interpretation of Resolution 2758, asserting that it does not address Taiwan's sovereignty and that China's distortion of the resolution is illegitimate. This follows the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC)'s coordinated efforts to push back against Beijing's use of the resolution to block Taiwan's participation in international organizations like the UN.³¹
- Revisiting and rectifying this misinterpretation is seen as a vital step in creating an opening

for Taiwan’s observer status. Correcting this misunderstanding could remove a significant legal barrier and help overcome China’s objections, paving the way for Taiwan’s greater involvement in international organizations. The push for a more accurate interpretation of Resolution 2758 has the potential to set a precedent, enabling Taiwan’s future inclusion not only in Interpol but also in other vital global institutions.

These sustained efforts—whether through legislative action, diplomatic campaigns, or re-examining the legal basis for Taiwan’s exclusion—reflect the growing international consensus that Taiwan’s participation in Interpol is not only fair but also essential for global security. The focus now lies in overcoming the geopolitical hurdles, such as China’s opposition, and securing a platform for Taiwan in the international law enforcement community.

The “Unknowable Known” of Interpol Elections

One of the most underappreciated aspects of international organizations like Interpol is the significance of the nationality and political backing of its leadership, specifically the Secretary-General and the President. While Interpol is structured as an independent entity aimed at combating transnational crime, the election of its Secretary-General and President—two distinct roles—often has a geopolitical dimension. Explained in simple terms, the Secretary-General functions much like a CEO, managing daily operations, while the President serves as the Chair of the Board. Both roles are filled through election processes that can be influenced by global power dynamics, which create what we might call an “unknowable known”—a web of political allegiances and expectations that shape the organization’s direction on sensitive issues, such as Taiwan’s exclusion from Interpol.³²

It is not unreasonable to suggest that, like other international organizations, candidates for the roles of Secretary-General and President often receive backing from powerful states. While we might be wrong in assuming it, we would definitely be wrong for not assuming it. This support goes beyond mere acknowledgment of their qualifications, extending to diplomatic alliances

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and potential obligations. The recent election of Ahmed Nasser Al Raisi from the UAE to the Presidency of Interpol illustrates this point. Al Raisi was elected in November 2021 after a competitive election process that required three rounds of voting. In the final round, he secured 68 percent of the vote, demonstrating substantial international backing. Although the extent of China’s involvement in his election is part of the “unknowable,” it is widely acknowledged that China leaves nothing to chance when it comes to influencing Taiwan’s status in international organizations, including Interpol. Given China’s close political and economic ties with the UAE, it is reasonable to infer that China may have played a role in supporting Al Raisi’s candidacy. The potential for such backing is further underscored by China and the UAE’s shared—and widely decried—interest in using Interpol’s Red Notice system for politically sensitive purposes.³³

This dynamic also applies to the election of Interpol’s Secretary-General, whose next appointee takes office on November 7, 2024. On that date, Valdecy Urquiza from Brazil will succeed Germany’s Jürgen Stock. Like Al Raisi’s election, the extent of China’s influence in Urquiza’s selection remains uncertain, but given that China never leaves Taiwan’s membership matters to chance, it would be illogical to assume none. China’s involvement in global governance and its efforts to secure allies within key international institutions are well-documented. Just as with Al Raisi’s election, Urquiza’s appointment likely reflects broader geopolitical maneuvering, particularly considering Brazil’s alignment with BRICS (Brazil,

Russia, India, China, and South Africa), a group of emerging economies that work to challenge Western-dominated institutions.³⁴

China's likely backing of candidates, whether for the Presidency or Secretary-General role, creates a form of "gravitational pull", like major donors exercising influence over political parties. This means that while these leaders may not explicitly adopt policies dictated by their backers, they might avoid raising sensitive issues, such as Taiwan's observer status, that could upset countries like China. The "unknowable known" manifests in procedural decisions—whether to bring Taiwan's inclusion to the General Assembly floor, how agenda items are prioritized, and the framing of internal debates. This type of influence, though subtle, often deniable, and hard to detect, complicates Taiwan's ability to escape the geopolitical forces that have long marginalized its participation in organizations like Interpol.

Compounding the complexity of this Interpol question for Taiwan, China's geopolitical influence will soon be solidified at the highest levels of Interpol's leadership. With Al Raisi from the UAE already holding the Presidency and Urquiza from Brazil about to assume the Secretary-General role, both apex positions within Interpol will be held by individuals from BRICS-aligned nations with strong ties to China and whose appointments have more likely than not been supported by China in various unknowable ways. The UAE joined BRICS in 2023, while Brazil has been a founding member since the group's inception. This alignment underscores the potential for China to further exert influence within Interpol, particularly on issues like Taiwan's inclusion. BRICS nations often cooperate on issues related to global governance and security, challenging Western-led institutions, and this shared ideology could make it less likely that Taiwan's bid for observer status will be supported or prioritized right now.

The reality is that China's influence, backed by BRICS allies, could further complicate Taiwan's efforts to gain observer status or full membership in Interpol before the terms of Al Raisi and Urquiza end in 2025 and 2028, respectively. While the specific influence China exerts remains the "unknowable known," the broader power dynamics at play suggest that geopolitical considerations will continue to shape Interpol's approach to Taiwan's exclusion, whether openly or behind the scenes. The only

question then is whose geopolitics provide more favorable winds for Taiwan? Who has the resolve?

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Taiwan's inclusion in Interpol is not just a matter of fairness but a necessity for global security. As transnational crime networks become more sophisticated and globalized, excluding Taiwan leaves significant gaps in international law enforcement efforts. Taiwan's strong capabilities, strategic location, and proven commitment to fighting global crime make it a valuable partner for Interpol. As we have made clear, Taiwan's exclusion is akin to self-harm; it makes us all unsafe.

Considering the upcoming 2024 Interpol General Assembly, we recommend the following actions:

- 1. Advocate for Taiwan's Observer Status**
Immediate action should be taken by like-minded nations to support Taiwan's bid for observer status at Interpol. This would grant Taiwan access to the I-24/7 communications system, allowing for timely and accurate exchanges of criminal intelligence.
- 2. Strengthen Diplomatic Pressure on China**
Efforts should be made to diplomatically pressure China to cease blocking Taiwan's participation in international organizations. The focus should be on demonstrating how Taiwan's exclusion harms not only Taiwan but also global security efforts.
- 3. Encourage Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation**
Until Taiwan's observer status is secured, the international community should continue to strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Taiwan on law enforcement matters, ensuring that Taiwan is not isolated from global crime-fighting efforts.
- 4. Promote Public Awareness**
Public campaigns should be launched to raise global awareness about the negative impacts of Taiwan's exclusion from Interpol. Governments, NGOs, and academic institutions should be involved in amplifying the message of Taiwan's critical role in global security.

5. **Advocate for Transparent Leadership Elections**

Nations should push for greater transparency in Interpol’s leadership elections to ensure impartiality. This would help prevent geopolitical influence, such as BRICS support for candidates aligned with China, from affecting decisions on Taiwan’s observer status.

6. **Revisit the Interpretation of UN Resolution 2758**

Efforts should focus on revisiting the misuse of UN Resolution 2758, which is frequently cited by China to block Taiwan’s participation in international organizations. Clarifying that the resolution only pertains to UN representation and does not exclude Taiwan from specialized agencies like Interpol, would remove a significant legal barrier to Taiwan’s inclusion. This reinterpretation could open the door for Taiwan’s observer status in Interpol and other international bodies.

Taiwan’s inclusion in Interpol is not just a matter of fairness but a critical step for strengthening global security and ensuring our own safety. We do not live in an age where crime is local. In an era where transnational crime—such as cybercrime, human trafficking, and terrorism—requires seamless international cooperation, Taiwan’s exclusion leaves significant gaps in the global law enforcement network. As the 2024 Interpol General Assembly approaches, the international community must seize this opportunity to advocate for Taiwan’s observer status. Revisiting the legal misuse of UN Resolution 2758—specifically in the context, in situ, at the General Assembly—is an essential step toward removing the unjustified barrier to Taiwan’s participation. Granting Taiwan access to Interpol’s data-sharing systems and global networks will enhance collective efforts against crime, ensuring that no nation is left isolated in this fight. Excluding Taiwan from Interpol does us all harm. Now more than ever, Taiwan’s participation in Interpol is essential for a safer, more connected world.

Author –

Brian Iselin is Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Security and Development Policy

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