

Practical Constraints on the "Internationalization" of the Taiwan Question and the Strategic Environment for China's National Reunification amid the Rise of the Global South

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Executive Summary

In recent years, the influence of Global South countries has continued to rise, accelerating adjustments in the international balance of power and the global governance system and exerting an important impact on the external environment surrounding the Taiwan question. Against the backdrop of intensifying strategic competition among major powers, the United States and a small number of other Western countries have increasingly manipulated Taiwan-related issues and promoted the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question through political, military, and public-opinion means, seriously departing from the one-China principle widely upheld by the international community.

Global South countries have long attached importance to such fundamental principles as sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs, and a multilateral international order centered on the United Nations. On Taiwan-related matters, they generally uphold the one-China principle, forming an important political foundation for the international community's handling of the Taiwan question. As Global South countries participate more deeply in global governance and their influence continues to grow, the international consensus on the one-China principle is further consolidated, clearly constraining the space for the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question.

China's national reunification is underpinned by an irreversible historical trend and a solid practical foundation. In response to attempts by external forces to promote the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question, China should further deepen strategic communication and practical cooperation with Global South countries; continue strengthening international communication and discourse-building on Taiwan around the historical facts of the Taiwan question, its basis in international law, and China's philosophy of peaceful development; actively participate in reform of global governance; expand the foundation of common interests; consolidate international recognition of the one-China principle; and foster a more favorable international environment for advancing complete national reunification.

› Key Points

- The influence of the Global South continues to grow and is accelerating adjustments in the international landscape and the global governance system. The principles it advocates, including sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs, are highly compatible with the commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity embodied in the one-China principle.
- The "internationalization" of the Taiwan question faces clear practical constraints. The Taiwan question is an internal affair of China, and the one-China principle has become a broad consensus of the international community. Attempts by external forces to promote the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question cannot alter this objective reality.
- The growing strength of the Global South will further consolidate the international foundation of the one-China principle. As developing countries participate more deeply in global governance, their consensus on sovereign equality, territorial integrity, opposition to external interference, and related principles continues to deepen, creating a broader international environment for upholding the one-China principle.

› Policy Recommendations

- Deepen strategic communication and practical cooperation with Global South countries. Use development cooperation to build shared interests and political mutual trust to consolidate the international foundation of the one-China principle.
- Strengthen international communication and discourse-building on Taiwan-related issues. Focusing on the historical facts of the Taiwan question, its basis in international law, and international practice, improve the precision and effectiveness of communication with Global South countries.
- Actively participate in reform and development of the global governance system. Strengthen coordination and cooperation with Global South countries in multilateral mechanisms, promote the development of a fairer and more reasonable international order, and create a favorable external environment for safeguarding China's core interests.

The Rise of the Global South Drives a Profound Transformation of the International Landscape

In recent years, the Global South¹ has risen rapidly and its influence has continued to grow. Across the world's political and economic structure, international governance system, and concepts of international relations, it has become an important force driving adjustments in the international balance of power and changes in the global governance system.

A. The Global South as a Major Force Reshaping the Global Political and Economic Landscape

Unlike the traditional concept of developing countries, the Global South places greater emphasis on the common features shared by developing countries in their historical experiences, development aspirations, and international positions. Its collective rise is an important marker of the structural shift in international power in the twenty-first century.

The Global South encompasses the vast majority of the world's population and is becoming a major pillar of global economic growth. In recent years, the global share of emerging market and developing economies has steadily increased. Measured at purchasing power parity, the aggregate economic output of the Global South has surpassed that of the traditional Western developed-country bloc.²

1 The conceptual boundaries of the "Global South" have not yet been defined consistently in Chinese and international scholarship. In general, the Global South is neither a purely geographical concept nor a unified political bloc opposed to the United States and other developed Western countries. It is a concept combining geographical, historical, developmental, and international political-economic attributes. It generally encompasses most developing countries and emerging economies in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania, including large and internationally influential economies such as China, India, Brazil, Indonesia, and South Africa, as well as numerous small and medium-sized economies such as Bangladesh, Ghana, and Rwanda. The concept highlights the shared or similar colonial histories, development circumstances, and demands for reform of the international order among relevant countries and societies, while emphasizing the center-periphery power structure, unequal development opportunities, and global inequalities they face in the existing international system. See: United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South—Human Progress in a Diverse World*. UNDP, 2013, pp.1-2; Nour Dados and Raewyn Connell, "The Global South," *Contexts*, Vol.11, No.1, 2012, pp.12-13.

2 According to the latest report released by the United Nations, Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean,

At the same time, political autonomy among Global South countries has continued to strengthen, and these countries increasingly participate in international affairs on the basis of their own core interests. On global issues such as regional conflicts, climate governance, and energy security, most Global South countries maintain independent judgments and have moved from peripheral supporting roles in the international system to important actors shaping global developments.³

B. The Global South's Growing Voice in Global Governance and the Diversification of the International Order

The United Nations-centered international system established after World War II was long dominated by developed European and North American countries in rule-making. As the comprehensive strength of Global South countries grows and their international participation deepens, the power structure of global governance is undergoing profound adjustment.

The great majority of United Nations member states are developing countries, giving the Global South an inherent numerical and political advantage in areas such as international security, public development, and global governance. The maturation of multilateral platforms such as BRICS has concentrated and amplified the collective aspirations of Global South countries to reform the international order and participate in global governance.⁴

As the Global South continues to rise, an international order in which a small number of countries monopolize rule-making is increasingly difficult to sustain. The international order is evolving in a more balanced, inclusive, and pluralistic direction, while developing countries are steadily increasing their voice in global governance.

among other Global South regions, together account for more than 80% of the world's 8.2 billion people, making the Global South the main locus of the world's population. See: United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2024*, 2024. World Bank data show that emerging market and developing economies (Emerging Market and Developing Economies, EMDEs)—an important component of the Global South—account for approximately 45% of global economic output at market exchange rates and have contributed about 60% of the increase in global economic growth over the past two decades, making them an important driver of global growth. See: World Bank Group, *Global Economic Prospects*, 2025. International Monetary Fund data show that, measured at purchasing power parity, emerging market and developing economies now account for more than 60% of the global economy, exceeding the share of advanced economies, and the center of gravity of the global economy continues to shift toward Global South countries. See: International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook*, 2026.

3 Xu Xiujun, Wang Youming, Li Qiang, Zhang Jie, and Jiang Shixue, "The Global South in an Age of International Order Transition: Strategic Importance and Impact," *International Forum*, No. 2, 2024, pp. 3–32.

4 Yang Jilong and Lin Hongyu, "Reshaping Global Development Governance: Strategic Synergy between the BRICS Cooperation Mechanism and the 'Global South'," *Pacific Journal*, No. 1, 2026, pp. 44–58.

C. The Global South's Diplomatic Outlook and the Reinforcement of the Principle of Sovereign Equality

Upholding the sovereign equality of states and safeguarding territorial integrity are important diplomatic principles long valued by the overwhelming majority of Global South countries. These principles are closely related to their shared historical experiences of colonial rule, national independence, and unequal development. Many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America suffered foreign colonial oppression and therefore remain highly vigilant against power politics, unilateralism, and external interference.

On this basis, most Global South countries emphasize the fundamental norms of international relations established by the Charter of the United Nations, including sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs, and regard them as an important foundation for handling international disputes and maintaining international order. These principles also form an important political backdrop to how the international community views the Taiwan question.

From the perspective of many Global South countries, externalizing and internationalizing questions involving sovereignty and territorial integrity may intensify regional tensions and weaken an international order based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, the overwhelming majority of Global South countries tend to avoid allowing the Taiwan question to become an instrument of strategic competition among major powers and are unwilling to be forced to "take sides" in China-U.S. competition.⁵

The Rise of the Global South Narrows the Space for the "Internationalization" of the Taiwan Question

A. The one-China Principle as an Important Political Basis for the International Community's Handling of Taiwan-Related Affairs

At its core, the Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is fundamentally an internal affair of China rather than an interstate dispute in the ordinary

5 Henrietta Levin and Hugh Grant-Chapman, *Understanding Global South Perspectives on Taiwan*. Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2026.

sense. For decades, the one-China principle and the related diplomatic arrangements adopted by countries on that basis have constituted an important political foundation for the international community's handling of Taiwan-related affairs.

In 1971, the 26th Session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758, restoring the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations and recognizing the Government of the People's Republic of China as the only lawful government representing China in the United Nations. Since then, the one-China principle has gradually become an important political foundation for the overwhelming majority of countries in handling relations with China and Taiwan-related affairs. As of 2026, 183 countries had established diplomatic relations with China on the basis of the one-China principle, accounting for approximately 95% of all United Nations member states.⁶ Related research shows that 119 United Nations member states explicitly support the one-China principle in public diplomatic documents, with most of them affirming China's position regarding Taiwan's status.⁷

This diplomatic pattern emerged through the evolution of the postwar international order and long-term international practice and is closely related to the fundamental principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in internal affairs established by the Charter of the United Nations. Attempts to portray the Taiwan question as an "international dispute" in the ordinary sense lack a basis in international law and differ significantly from the one-China framework and diplomatic practice long maintained by most countries.

B. The Continued Contraction of Taiwan's So-Called International Space Reflects the Limited Basis for the Internationalization of the Taiwan Question

The continued contraction of Taiwan's so-called "international space" largely reflects the international community's broad recognition of the one-China principle.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 restored China's lawful rights in the United Nations and recognized the Government of the People's Republic of China as the only lawful representative of China in the United Nations. As China's comprehensive national strength and international influence have continued to grow, and as countries' demand for economic and trade cooperation with China has increased, the number of Taiwan's so-called "diplomatic allies" has continued to decline.⁸ For most Global South countries, economic

6 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian's Regular Press Conference on May 8, 2026," May 8, 2026, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/202605/t20260508_11907163.shtml.

7 Benjamin Herscovitch, *Five One-Chinas: The Contest to Define Taiwan*. Lowy Institute, 2025, p.8.

8 Ibid.

development, improved living standards, and modernization remain core policy objectives. They therefore place greater emphasis on practical cooperation with China and seek to avoid becoming entangled in Taiwan-related political disputes.

The shrinking of Taiwan's so-called "international space" is the result of changes in the international landscape, adjustments in countries' diplomatic practice, and the long-term consolidation and operation of the international foundation of the one-China principle. It also demonstrates the severe practical constraints facing attempts to promote the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question.

C. The Strategic Logic and Practical Constraints of U.S. Efforts to Internationalize the Taiwan Question

In recent years, the United States, together with a small number of other Western countries, has hyped Taiwan-related issues and promoted the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question through intensified political interaction, military collusion, public-opinion campaigns, and other means. Its principal objective is to serve U.S. strategic competition with China and contain China's development.⁹

On the one hand, the United States has embedded the Taiwan question in its Indo-Pacific strategy and regional security architecture, raising the visibility of Taiwan-related issues and emphasizing Taiwan's so-called strategic significance. On the other hand, it has constructed narratives around issues such as "supply chain security" and "regional crisis," attempting to place the Taiwan question within broader international security and economic agendas and thereby dilute its historical context and political character.

Such political manipulation, however, faces clear practical limitations. The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Attempts to package this internal matter as an "international dispute" depart from fundamental principles of international relations, are unlikely to gain broad recognition from the international community, and cannot alter the one-China framework that has long taken shape internationally.

D. The Rise of the Global South Further Constrains the Internationalization of the Taiwan Question

The collective development of the Global South and the growth of its international influence are accelerating changes in the international balance of power and the global governance landscape. Fundamental principles of international relations long emphasized by Global South countries, including sovereign equality and non-interference in internal

⁹ Zhou Wenxing and Diao Guoxuan, "An Analysis of the Biden Administration's Efforts and Their Limits in Promoting the 'Internationalization' of the Taiwan Question," *Taiwan Research Journal*, No. 2, 2025, pp. 1–17.

affairs, are highly compatible with the commitment to safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity embodied in the one-China principle and have become an important basis for constraining the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question.

Narratives promoted by the United States and other Western countries about a Taiwan-related "regional crisis" have not gained broad recognition among Global South countries. Developing countries are more concerned with their own development and various global challenges. Based on historical experiences of colonial rule, national independence, and unequal development, most Global South countries tend to oppose external interference and the spillover of major-power competition, and they seek to avoid the "internationalization" of Taiwan-related issues.

As Global South countries participate more deeply in global governance, their influence in international affairs will further increase. Through diplomatic practice, multilateral mechanisms, development cooperation, and other channels, they will shape the international environment surrounding Taiwan-related issues and provide stronger support for the international foundation of the one-China principle.

China's National Reunification Has Historical Inevitability and a Solid Practical Foundation

A. China's National Reunification in Accordance with the Course of Historical Development

Across the development of modern nation-states, maintaining national unity and territorial integration has been an important political objective for national development and social cohesion. The experience of national unification in many countries shows that political integration can enhance stability, promote economic development, and strengthen a country's overall national power.

Political unity has been an important historical characteristic of Chinese civilization for millennia. Taiwan and the mainland share the same roots and cultural heritage and together constitute important parts of Chinese civilization. The political separation across the Taiwan Strait that emerged in modern times is a temporary phenomenon produced under particular historical conditions; it has not changed the historical facts, legal foundations, or objective reality that both sides of the Strait belong to one and the same China. Following the broad course of historical development, achieving complete national reunification is the inevitable

destination of the development of Chinese civilization.

B. Deep Historical, Cultural, and Practical Ties across the Taiwan Strait

People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait share bonds of kinship and a common destiny, providing an important foundation for the stable development of cross-Strait relations. Over the years, the mainland and Taiwan have developed close, multi-level ties in economic and trade exchanges, movement of people, cultural interaction, and other areas.

In terms of people-to-people exchanges, cross-Strait travel has long remained substantial, covering family visits, tourism, business, study, employment, and many other fields and forming an extensive and deep network of social connections. Economically, the two sides have closely connected industrial chains; the mainland has long been an important trading partner of Taiwan, and enterprises on both sides have developed strong complementarities in electronic information and other sectors. Culturally, a shared written and spoken language, traditional culture, and historical memory form an important spiritual bond that is difficult to sever.

C. China's Growing National Strength and Changes in the International Environment Create Favorable Conditions for National Reunification

National reunification requires both a historical foundation and support from comprehensive national strength and the international environment. At present, China continues to increase its economic weight, scientific and technological innovation capacity, and participation in international institutions, while the breadth of its engagement in global governance and its international influence continue to expand.¹⁰ At the same time, the influence of Global South countries is rising and the international balance of power and global governance system are undergoing continued adjustment, providing important support for the international foundation of the one-China principle.

As China continues to deepen practical cooperation and strategic mutual trust with Global South countries, most countries, based on their own development interests and long-standing diplomatic practice, continue to maintain the established one-China framework. Geopolitical maneuvers by external forces around the Taiwan question are unlikely to change the diplomatic pattern that has long prevailed in the international community.

10 Data from relevant institutions show that China ranks among the world's leading countries in economic development, global innovation, and contributions to multilateral systems. See: World Bank Group, "Rebalancing Growth: China Economic Update," July 7, 2026, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2026/07/07/rebalancing-growth-china-economic-update>; World Intellectual Property Organization, *Global Innovation Index 2025*, 2024; United Nations, "How We Are Funded," July 10, 2026, https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded?utm_source.

Actively Foster an International Environment Conducive to China's National Reunification

A. Advancing South-South Cooperation and Deepening Practical Cooperation and Strategic Mutual Trust

In the face of increasingly intense international public-opinion and discourse competition over Taiwan-related issues, China should rely on South-South cooperation platforms to continuously deepen all-round exchanges and practical cooperation with Global South countries. It should leverage China's accumulated experience and development strengths in infrastructure construction, economic development, poverty reduction and governance, scientific and technological innovation, and other fields; continue expanding areas of convergent bilateral interests; and consolidate the foundation for cooperation.¹¹ It should also continuously enhance bilateral strategic and political mutual trust, further consolidate the broad international consensus on upholding the one-China principle, and strengthen the international cooperative foundation for national reunification.

B. Deepening Engagement with the Global South and Enhancing International Communication on Taiwan-Related Issues

At the core of the contest over the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question is competition for international cognitive and discursive influence and value-based narratives. External forces continue to manufacture misleading narratives in an attempt to distort the international community's basic understanding of the Taiwan question. China should therefore tailor its international communication to the communication contexts and cognitive characteristics of Global South countries, clarify the historical origins of the Taiwan question, explain the international-law basis of the one-China principle, and present the policy substance of China's peaceful development and peaceful reunification. These efforts should help Global South countries recognize that the Taiwan question is an internal affair of China and consolidate the international public-opinion and social foundation of the one-China consensus.

C. Deepening Participation in Global Governance and Enhancing China's International Discursive Influence

China has consistently upheld the central role of the United Nations in international

11 Jiang Shixue, "China's Contributions to South-South Cooperation—In the Perspective of the 'Global South'", *Frontiers*, No. 7, 2024, pp. 82–94.

affairs, put forward the four Global Initiatives on development, security, civilization, and governance, and promoted the evolution of the global governance system toward greater fairness, reasonableness, inclusiveness, and balance through related ideas and practices.¹² These initiatives are highly compatible with the common aspirations of Global South countries and help build broad international consensus. China's expanding participation in global governance and growing institutional influence have strengthened its voice in international affairs and provided important support for safeguarding its core interests and fostering a favorable external environment.

D. Addressing External Strategic Competition and Guarding Against Interference in Taiwan-Related Affairs

In response to attempts by the United States and a small number of other Western countries to promote the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question, China should maintain strategic resolve, uphold the basic policy of peaceful reunification, resolutely oppose and curb separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence," and resist interference by external forces. At the same time, China should coordinate diplomatic, economic, cultural, international communication, and other instruments; continuously strengthen international communication and discourse-building; improve the international community's objective understanding of the historical background and legal foundations of the Taiwan question and the one-China principle; effectively prevent and defuse risks of external interference; and foster a more favorable international environment for advancing national reunification.

12 Ren Lin and He Yiran, "Global Governance Initiative: A Chinese Approach to Global Governance Challenges," *International Studies*, No. 5, 2025, pp. 1–19.

Conclusion

The collective development of Global South countries and the growth of their international influence constitute an important trend in the transformation of the international system in the twenty-first century. As developing countries strengthen their comprehensive capabilities, enhance their strategic autonomy, and participate more deeply in global governance, the international balance of power continues to adjust and the global governance system is displaying a more pluralistic and multi-centered pattern of development.

Efforts by some Western countries to promote the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question primarily serve their objectives of geopolitical competition and preservation of hegemony. Such practices are in clear tension with the One China principle long upheld by most countries and are unlikely to gain broad international support. As Global South countries participate more extensively in global governance and their influence in international affairs continues to grow, they will further strengthen the constraints imposed by the existing international diplomatic landscape on how Taiwan-related issues are handled.

The evolution of the Taiwan question fundamentally depends on China's own development and the trajectory of cross-Straits relations, while also being affected to some extent by changes in the external international balance of power. As China's comprehensive national strength and international influence continue to increase and the global balance of power continues to adjust, the external environment for safeguarding national unity will further improve. Achieving China's complete national reunification is an important direction that accords with the laws of historical development and the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation.

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