

# TAIWAN 194: EMULATING THE PALESTINIANS TO ADVOCATE INTERNATIONALLY FOR TAIWAN AND TO COUNTER CHINA

BY JONATHAN SCHANZER, RICHARD GOLDBERG, AND RADM (RET.) MARK MONTGOMERY<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

From the South China Sea and Hong Kong to Xinjiang and India, China's aggression is on the rise. The United States has vowed to counter Beijing in these and other jurisdictions. A great power competition is escalating.

Right now, the balance of military power between the United States and China in the Western Pacific and East Asia is shifting toward Beijing. The Pentagon is working overtime to reverse this trend. It will take time, however. China may already have an edge in terms of soft power, particularly in international organizations. Decades of efforts to increase its influence within the United Nations and other multilateral organizations has strengthened Beijing's ability to thwart American initiatives in the very system the West created to promote transparency, rule of law, and freedom of access.

To begin to level the playing field in terms of soft power, Washington can launch an asymmetric and multilateral diplomatic campaign to advance the cause of Taiwan — a key U.S. economic and security partner that China seeks to absorb. Such a campaign would be very much in the American interest. As the 2018 National Defense Strategy Commission noted, “allowing Taiwan to be absorbed by the mainland would represent a crushing blow to America's credibility and regional position.”<sup>2</sup> The reason, as then-Assistant Secretary of State David Stilwell noted, is that “Taiwan is a highly advanced \$600 billion economy with 23 million free people. It is a vision of how much the Chinese people can achieve.”<sup>3</sup> A diplomatic campaign to enhance Taiwan's international standing (but not necessarily promote its independence) can advance that vision. Such a campaign might also weaken Beijing's stranglehold on multilateral institutions and boost Washington's leverage in increasingly tense disagreements over Chinese efforts to “reclaim” other territories.

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1. The authors wish to thank Bradley Bowman, Emily de La Bruyère, Mark Dubowitz, John Hardie, Nathan Picarsic, Craig Singleton, and Maseh Zarif for their contributions to this research memo.

2. U.S. National Defense Strategy Commission, “Providing for the Common Defense: The Assessment and Recommendations of the National Defense Strategy Commission,” November 2018, page 15. (<https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/providing-for-the-common-defense.pdf>)

3. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs David R. Stilwell, U.S. Department of State, “The United States, Taiwan, and the World: Partners for Peace and Prosperity,” *Speech Delivered at the Heritage Foundation*, August 31, 2020. (<https://www.state.gov/The-United-States-Taiwan-and-the-World-Partners-for-Peace-and-Prosperity>)

To devise and implement such a strategy, Washington can take a page from the Palestinian playbook. From 2009 through 2018, the Palestinians actively pursued a campaign called “Palestine 194,” seeking recognition at the United Nations and its member agencies. While the initiative failed to gain official statehood status for the Palestinians (it was never entirely clear if that was the true objective), the campaign increased recognition of the Palestinian national project at the United Nations. The campaign exploited the fact that while great powers such as the United States and China enjoy veto power at the UN Security Council, the vast majority of international agencies operate based on majority rule. This dynamic relegates even great powers to just one vote among many (without discounting their ability to wield pressure and manipulate votes).

China has mounted a lengthy and extensive diplomatic effort to exclude Taiwan from international organizations. After its first decade of such efforts, Beijing scored a significant success in 1971, when the United States agreed to grant China the Taiwanese seat at the United Nations (and on the Security Council) via UN General Assembly Resolution 2758. That decision was tied to the Nixon administration’s efforts to restore relations with the People’s Republic of China, culminating in Nixon’s historic 1972 visit. In 1979, the Carter administration went one step further, formally switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China and closing the U.S. Embassy in Taipei. That decision spurred a 40-year contest between China and Taiwan to garner diplomatic recognition. Since 1991, Taipei has pursued a “pragmatic policy” whereby countries can have relations with both China and Taiwan, but Beijing has coerced, cajoled, and bribed countries to choose China alone. Today, Taiwan has full diplomatic relations with only 13 small UN member states (out of 194) and the Holy See (a UN observer state).

Because of Resolution 2758, Taiwan was removed from most UN bodies. In bodies where statistics or other data from Taiwan were still desired or required, the territory was identified as the “Taiwan Province of China.” Beijing has worked assiduously to exclude or remove Taiwan from non-UN intergovernmental bodies as well. Specifically, China has successfully worked to remove or exclude Taiwan from many of the most significant organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the International Civil Aviation Organization, Interpol, the International Standards Organization, the International Electrotechnical Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Maritime Organization. Through creative workarounds, Taiwan has been able to maintain some status in numerous sporting, business, and professional organizations. Indeed, Taiwan competes in the Olympics under a unique International Olympic Committee/Chinese Taipei flag, similar to athletes from countries that are banned from competition (such as Russia).

## **U.S.-TAIWAN TIES**

The 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) provided the legal basis for the United States to maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with Taiwan. It also contains provisions for Taiwan’s defense. Indeed, the TRA states that it is U.S. policy to “provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character” and “to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”<sup>4</sup>

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4. Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, Pub. L. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14, codified as amended at 22 U.S.C. §3301. (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/96th-congress/house-bill/2479/text>)

The United States has upheld its end of this agreement through robust trade, people-to-people connections, visa waivers, and other indications of warm ties. Importantly, Washington has further upheld its TRA commitment to support Taiwanese defensive capabilities through much-needed arms sales, and the U.S. military has conducted planning and exercises that indicate U.S. willingness to take action to prevent coercive activity against Taiwan.

What is missing, particularly as the great power competition between Beijing and Washington heats up, is U.S. support in the “gray zone.”<sup>5</sup> Diplomatic warfare should be a key component of this fight. Fortunately, we are not starting from zero. As the State Department notes:

The United States supports Taiwan’s membership in international organizations that do not require statehood as a condition of membership and encourages Taiwan’s meaningful participation in international organizations where its membership is not possible. Taiwan and the United States belong to a number of the same international organizations, including the World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and the Asian Development Bank. In June 2015, [the American Institute in Taiwan] and [the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office] established the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, a platform for expanding U.S.-Taiwan cooperation on global and regional issues such as public health, economic development, energy, women’s rights, and disaster relief.<sup>6</sup>

But these efforts alone are insufficient. With China now embracing a dangerous and expansionist foreign policy, it is increasingly apparent that Beijing has prioritized “reunification” with the island. Washington and Taipei must ramp up their efforts to achieve recognition of Taiwan in the international arena. The Palestinians have demonstrated that such a campaign can notch significant successes.

## THE PALESTINIAN CAMPAIGN

The Palestinian initiative to gain recognition at the United Nations began in 2005. That year, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas traveled to Brazil for a summit of South American and Arab states. He met with Brazil’s leftist president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who vowed that at the end of his second term (expiring January 1, 2011), he would rally Latin American support for Palestinian recognition at the United Nations.

Latin America, with its left-wing governments, proved fertile ground for the Palestinian campaign. In early February 2008, Costa Rica officially recognized a Palestinian state.<sup>7</sup> Abbas toured the region the following year,<sup>8</sup> visiting Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Venezuela, the latter of which inaugurated a Palestinian embassy in Caracas.<sup>9</sup>

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5. Captain Philip Kapusta, “The Gray Zone,” *Special Warfare*, October–December 2015, pages 18–25. (<https://www.soc.mil/SWCS/SWmag/archive/SW2804/GrayZone.pdf>)

6. U.S. Department of State, Face Sheet, “U.S. Relations With Taiwan,” August 31, 2018. (<https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-taiwan>)

7. UN General Assembly, Meeting Coverage, “United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace Concludes in Montevideo, Uruguay,” March 31, 2011. (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/gapal1193.doc.htm>)

8. “Abbas concludes South America tour,” *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), November 29, 2009. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120118074335/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=243116>)

9. “Venezuelan-Palestinian ties forged,” *Al Jazeera* (Qatar), April 28, 2009. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/04/28/venezuelan-palestinian-ties-forged>)

In March 2010, da Silva visited Israel and the Palestinian territories, expressing support for the Palestinians and criticizing settlements in the West Bank.<sup>10</sup> The following December, just before his term in office expired, da Silva announced that Brazil recognized an independent Palestinian state.<sup>11</sup> With that, the Latin American floodgates opened. Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Uruguay soon expressed support for a Palestinian state.<sup>12</sup> On New Year's Eve, 2010, Abbas attended a ceremony in Brasília to lay the cornerstone for a new Palestinian embassy.<sup>13</sup>

Latin America was not the only region to back the Palestinian initiative. In June 2010, France announced it would upgrade the Palestinian delegation in Paris.<sup>14</sup> Spain, Portugal, and Norway followed suit later that year.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, Abbas continued enlisting foreign leaders to recognize a Palestinian state. After Abbas visited then-Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara, Turkey announced it would recognize a Palestinian state (within the 1967 borders) at an unspecified time. Erdogan reportedly also promised to promote the initiative with other heads of state.<sup>16</sup>

On December 13, 2010, a group of foreign ministers from EU countries announced that their governments would recognize a Palestinian state "when appropriate."<sup>17</sup> By the end of 2010, almost 100 countries had indicated support for an independent Palestine.

In early 2011, Cyprus, Greece, and Ireland upgraded their diplomatic delegations to the Palestinian territories.<sup>18</sup> The United Kingdom and Denmark did the same that March.<sup>19</sup> By the spring of 2011, Iceland, Slovenia, and Spain

10. "Lula da Silva calls for Palestinian state during official visit to Israel," *MercoPress* (Uruguay), March 16, 2010. (<https://en.mercoPress.com/2010/03/16/lula-da-silva-calls-for-palestinian-state-during-official-visit-to-israel>)

11. "Brazil says it recognizes Palestinian state," *Associated Press*, December 4, 2010. (<https://www.jpost.com/International/Brazil-says-it-recognizes-Palestinian-state>)

12. "Uruguay recognizes Palestine statehood," *Associated Press*, March 16, 2011. (<https://www.foxnews.com/world/uruguay-recognizes-palestine-statehood.amp>)

13. "Abbas lays Brazil embassy cornerstone," *Agence France-Presse*, December 31, 2010. (<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4007250,00.html>)

14. "France upgrades its diplomatic relations with the Palestinians," *European Jewish Press* (Belgium), July 27, 2010. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20100731074155/http://www.ejpress.org:80/article/45147>)

15. "Portugal upgrades Palestinian representation," *Ma'an News Agency* (West Bank), October 14, 2010. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20101026044100/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=324060>); Marianne Stigset,

"Norway Announces Palestinian Embassy, Calls for State in 2011," *Bloomberg*, December 15, 2010. (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2010-12-15/norway-calls-for-palestinian-state-gives-diplomatic-mission-embassy-rank>); "Spain to upgrade Palestinian Authority's diplomatic status," *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), September 10, 2010. (<https://www.jpost.com/breaking-news/spain-to-upgrade-palestinian-authoritys-diplomatic-status>)

16. "Erdogan pledges support for '67 state," *Ma'an News Agency* (West Bank), June 12, 2010. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20101215215608/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=339326>)

17. Adrian Blomfield and Bruno Waterfield, "Europe threatens to recognise Palestinian state," *The Telegraph* (UK), December 13, 2010. (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/8199643/Europe-threatens-to-recognise-Palestinian-state.html>)

18. "Cyprus upgrades Palestinian delegation," *Ma'an News Agency* (West Bank), May 6, 2011. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130514061333/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=385370>); "Greece Upgrades Palestinian Representation Status," *Naharnet* (Lebanon), February 15, 2011. (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/3078-greece-upgrades-palestinian-representation-status>); Bruno Waterfield, "Uruguay recognizes Palestine statehood," *The Telegraph* (UK), January 25, 2011. (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ireland/8281760/Ireland-upgrades-Palestinian-diplomatic-delegation-to-a-mission.html>)

19. Julian Borger, "Palestinian diplomatic status in the UK upgraded," *The Guardian* (UK), March 7, 2011. (<https://www.theguardian.com/global/2011/mar/07/palestinian-diplomatic-status-upgraded>); UN Information System on the Question of Palestine, Division for Palestinian Rights, "Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine," March 2011. (<https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196815>)

had indicated their intention to recognize a Palestinian state.<sup>20</sup> This was followed by signals of support from the Dominican Republic and Peru.<sup>21</sup> In July 2011, Bulgaria, Belgium, and Norway announced their support.<sup>22</sup>

Europe was a particularly interesting battleground. The Palestinian initiative exposed fault lines among EU member states. German Chancellor Angela Merkel cautioned, “[I]t is not certain that unilateral recognition will contribute to promoting peace.”<sup>23</sup> Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini echoed her concerns. “Peace is made through negotiation, not through imposition,” he said.<sup>24</sup>

By contrast, French President Nicolas Sarkozy pledged: “If the peace process is still dead in September, France will face up to its responsibilities on the central question of the recognition of a Palestinian state.”<sup>25</sup> Spain’s foreign minister similarly opined that “now is the time to do something, to give the Palestinians the hope that a state could become reality.”<sup>26</sup>

U.S. lawmakers, for their part, registered their disapproval and threatened to withhold funding for the United Nations if it granted the Palestinians membership.<sup>27</sup> The Palestinian maneuver, after all, was a rejection of the Oslo Accords, the legal framework for U.S.-Palestinian ties. It was also a rejection of Washington’s role as the primary broker for Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy.

The U.S. threat was compounded by the Israelis, who warned they could withhold the roughly \$100 million in value-added taxes (VAT) they collected on behalf of the Palestinians each month. At the time, U.S. aid and Israeli-collected VAT amounted to more than \$1.5 billion per year — roughly three-quarters of the PA’s annual budget.

On September 23, 2011, Abbas announced that he had submitted “an application for the admission of Palestine on the basis of the 4 June 1967 borders, with [Jerusalem] as its capital, as a full member of the United Nations.”

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20. “Report: Iceland backs recognition of Palestinian state,” *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), July 6, 2011. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110928163234/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=402842>); “Report: Iceland backs recognition of Palestinian state,” *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), May 17, 2011. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20110520025449/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=388711>); Khaled Abu Toameh, “Spain will recognize Palestinian state on 1967 lines,” *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), (<https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Spain-will-recognize-Palestinian-state-on-1967-lines>)

21. “Dominican Republic supports Palestine’s statehood, honors Abbas,” *Xinhua News Agency* (China), October 8, 2011. (Archived version available at: [https://web.archive.org/web/20111020080423/http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-10/08/c\\_131179157.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20111020080423/http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2011-10/08/c_131179157.htm)); “Peru recognizes Palestinian state,” *Reuters*, January 24, 2011. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-peru/peru-recognizes-palestinian-state-idUSTRE70N5ZW20110124>)

22. “Bulgaria unexpectedly rebuffs Israel over Palestinian UN bid,” *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), July 7, 2011. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130514041612/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=403329>); “Who will endorse Palestine?” *Ynet* (Israel), August 27, 2011. (<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4114432,00.html>); David Sheen, “Norway’s Ambassador: Palestinian Appeal to UN Legitimate in Lieu of Treaty With Israel,” *Haaretz* (Israel), July 28, 2011. (<https://www.haaretz.com/1.5036419>)

23. Barak Ravid, “Merkel: Unilateral Recognition of Palestinian State May Not Push Peace Forward,” *Haaretz* (Israel), April 7, 2011. (<https://www.haaretz.com/1.5148549>)

24. “Mideast Peace ‘Window Closing’ Says Frattini,” *Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata* (Italy), May 23, 2011. ([Accessed via Lexis Nexis](#))

25. “Sarkozy: ‘Netanyahou doit prendre le risque de la paix’ [Sarkozy: ‘Netanyahu must take the risk of peace’],” *L’Express* (France), May 5, 2011. ([https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/sarkozy-netanyahou-doit-prendre-le-risque-de-la-paix\\_989485.html](https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/sarkozy-netanyahou-doit-prendre-le-risque-de-la-paix_989485.html))

26. Herb Keinon, “Spanish FM signals support for PA at UN, drawing,” *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), August 21, 2011. (<https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Spanish-FM-signals-support-for-PA-at-UN-drawing>)

27. Hilary Leila Kreiger, “Congress considers limiting UN aid if statehood granted,” *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), June 7, 2011. (<https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Congress-considers-limiting-UN-aid-if-statehood-granted>)

The Palestinian leader urged “the distinguished members of the Security Council to vote in favor of our full membership,” and he “call[ed] upon the States that did not recognized [sic] the State of Palestine as yet to do so.”<sup>28</sup>

The Palestinians called the initiative “Palestine 194,” reflecting their aim to be the 194th UN member state.

Abbas was celebrated at home. As *Al Jazeera* reported, a “welcome party was planned at the Muqataa, the presidential headquarters.” The Palestinian workers’ union called on its members to join the celebration. The teachers’ union announced that schools would close early to allow students and teachers to attend. Official news agencies called on the public to rally at the Muqataa. West Bankers received text messages advertising “the official mass reception.”<sup>29</sup>

Expectedly, Abbas’ reception was considerably cooler in Washington. Some legislators prepared to reduce U.S. aid to the PA. Others wanted to slash it entirely. The White House, for its part, wanted to keep aid flowing to retain leverage to bring the Palestinians back to the negotiating table.<sup>30</sup> In the end, the compromise was to withhold \$200 million, or roughly one-third of total annual U.S. aid to the PA, as a warning to the Palestinians not to continue their efforts at the United Nations.

Undeterred, Abbas made a play for membership in the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). As was the case with the Palestinians’ broader UN maneuver, the United States, Israel, Canada, and a handful of other countries were opposed. Among the more vocal supporters was France.

UNESCO’s willingness to accept the Palestinians came at great risk. According to an American law passed during the Clinton administration in the 1990s, the United States may not fund any part of the UN system that grants the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) the same standing as UN member states.<sup>31</sup> So, as the Palestinians pushed for membership, UNESCO’s annual budget stood to lose \$70 million (America’s 22 percent).<sup>32</sup>

The Quai d’Orsay began to have second thoughts. Despite having previously backed the Palestinian campaign, French diplomats suddenly asserted that it was “not the right time, nor the right place” to wrestle with the question of Palestine. These statements came only a few months after Sarkozy had pledged support for the broader initiative.<sup>33</sup>

Nevertheless, in autumn 2011, UNESCO’s Executive Board approved a draft resolution for Palestinian membership, sponsored by several Arab states, by a 40-to-four vote.<sup>34</sup> The four countries opposed were the United States,

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28. “Full Transcript of Abbas Speech at UN General Assembly,” *Haaretz* (Israel), September 23, 2011. (<https://www.haaretz.com/1.5182217>)

29. “Abbas receives rousing reception in Ramallah,” *Al Jazeera* (Qatar), September 25, 2011. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/09/25/abbas-receives-rousing-reception-in-ramallah>)

30. Tovah Lazaroff, Yaakov Katz, and Khaled Abu Toameh, “Obama opposes withholding funds to the PA,” *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), October 4, 2011. (<https://www.jpost.com/Diplomacy-and-Politics/Obama-opposes-withholding-funds-to-the-PA>)

31. Eugene Kontorovich, “Palestinian Membership in UN Agencies: Mandatory Defunding Under US Law,” *Kohelet Policy Forum*, July 2018. ([https://en.kohelet.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KPF085\\_eBook-39\\_291118\\_F.pdf](https://en.kohelet.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/KPF085_eBook-39_291118_F.pdf))

32. Luisa Blanchfield, “The UNESCO World Heritage Convention: Congressional Issues,” *Congressional Research Service*, July 20, 2011. (<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40164.pdf>)

33. Dan Perry and Don Melvin, “Europe set for key Palestine role,” *Associated Press*, May 25, 2011. ([http://archive.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2011/05/25/europe\\_set\\_for\\_key\\_palestine\\_role/?page=2](http://archive.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2011/05/25/europe_set_for_key_palestine_role/?page=2))

34. UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Press Release, “Executive Board recommends Palestinian membership,” September 29, 2011. (<https://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/document-2173>)

Germany, Latvia, and Romania.<sup>35</sup> Among the 14 countries abstaining was France. Around that time, UNESCO officials traveled to Washington to meet with administration officials, legislators, and other influential Beltway figures, trying to convince them of UNESCO's value and thwart a cut in U.S. funding.

UNESCO's General Conference voted later that month, with 107 of 173 countries voting in favor, 14 opposing, and 52 abstaining.<sup>36</sup> As expected, U.S. funding was slashed. The victory for the Palestinians was pyrrhic. Their victory came at a significant cost to their supporters, undermining international appetite for future initiatives on their behalf.

In January 2012, several states opposed to the Palestinian bid rotated off the Security Council, making way for countries more disposed to the move, such as Guatemala, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Morocco, and Togo.<sup>37</sup> Signaling a return to Turtle Bay, senior PLO official Nabil Sha'ath declared that 2012 marked "the start of an unprecedented diplomatic campaign." He promised "a year of pressure on Israel that will put it under a real international siege."<sup>38</sup>

In February, Abbas told the Arab League that he was prepared to continue his campaign at the United Nations. He received the Arab League's full support.<sup>39</sup> The PLO continued to consult with a number of Arab states throughout the spring. In May, Abbas again threatened to "extract a seat for Palestine as a non-member state."<sup>40</sup>

Meanwhile, Israeli media suggested that the Palestinians were planning a campaign, along the lines of the UNESCO bid, to gain recognition as an "observer state" at Rio+20, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil. Days before the conference, Palestinian Ambassador to Brazil Ibrahim Alzeben said, "We expect full-status participation because we already have it in UNESCO and we have ties with Brazil ... and with more than 130 countries."<sup>41</sup>

On July 19, PLO representative to Washington Maen Rashid Areikat denied reports that the United States was threatening to cease aid or close the PLO mission in response to the Palestinians' UN bid.<sup>42</sup> But it was clear that U.S. pressure was taking a toll. Reports circulated that Abbas might postpone the initiative until after the U.S. elections in early November. But not every Palestinian official agreed with this approach. According to PLO official

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35. Scott Sayare and Steven Erlanger, "Palestinians Win a Vote on Bid to Join Unesco," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2011. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/06/world/middleeast/palestinians-win-initial-vote-on-unesco-bid.html>)

36. "Palestinians get Unesco seat as 107 vote in favour," *BBC* (UK), October 31, 2011. (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15518173>)

37. "Bustling UN Security Council welcomes five new members," *France 24* (France), January 1, 2012. (<http://www.france24.com/en/20120101-united-nations-diplomacy-countries-join-arab-spring-un-security-council>)

38. Barak Ravid, Avi Issacharoff, and Natasha Mozgovaya, "Palestinians Plan Diplomatic Steps to Put Israel Under 'International Siege,'" *Haaretz* (Israel), January 2, 2012. (<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/palestinians-plan-diplomatic-steps-to-put-israel-under-international-siege-1.404973>)

39. "Abbas to ask Arab League for peace conference," *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), February 12, 2012. (<https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Abbas-to-ask-Arab-League-for-peace-conference>)

40. Khaled Abu Toameh and Herb Keinon, "Unity gov't watered down response to PA letter," *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), May 24, 2012. (<http://www.jpost.com/DiplomacyAndPolitics/Article.aspx?id=271319>)

41. "Palestinians Seek Full Representation at Rio+20," *Naharnet* (Lebanon), June 16, 2012. (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/43685-palestinians-seek-full-representation-at-rio-20/print>)

42. Allison Good, "Palestinians deny U.S. aid threat," *Foreign Policy*, July 19, 2012. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/07/19/palestinians-deny-u-s-aid-threat>)

Hanan Ashrawi, “There are some who might want to wait until after November because of American pressure, but the Americans have done nothing but put pressure on the Palestinians... What we need is to move fast.”<sup>43</sup>

Around that time, media reports revealed that Israel was “offering incentives to the PA to drop the unilateral statehood gambit.”<sup>44</sup> *Maariv* reported an offer “to release 50 prisoners detained before the Oslo Accords if the Palestinian Authority cancels its proposed UN bid.”<sup>45</sup> Abbas, however, stated he would continue “even if [that bid] conflicts with other parties’ interests.”<sup>46</sup>

As the debate continued, November 29, 2012, emerged as the date the Palestinians would return to Turtle Bay.<sup>47</sup> It was that date, in 1947, when the United Nations first accepted an Arab and a Jewish state in the British Mandate of Palestine. The United Nations has since named that date the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

But the Palestinians continued to waver for fear of angering Washington and putting relations with Israel on a collision course. The Associated Press reported in August that “the Palestinians are putting their quest for international recognition at the U.N. on hold for now.” The report also said that Abbas would “not ... apply at the General Assembly session next month, although he will informally appeal for recognition in a speech.”<sup>48</sup>

However, on September 5, in an about-face, Abbas announced the Palestinian leadership would proceed with the statehood bid. “I am going this month to the UN General Assembly in light of the latest decision in Doha, the Islamic summit and the Non-Aligned Movement summit,” Abbas said.<sup>49</sup>

The driving force behind the bid was the Fatah Central Committee. This powerful group “reiterated its support for President Mahmoud Abbas to seek upgraded status for Palestine at the United Nations this month,” *Ma'an News Agency* reported in September 2012.<sup>50</sup>

On September 20, *The New York Times* reported that the Palestinians planned a “subdued campaign” for non-member state status. According to the report, the Palestinian “delegation heading to New York this weekend is half the size of last year’s. And there are no concerts or street parties planned this time around.”

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43. Korin Laub and Mohammed Daraghmeh, “PA prepares for showdown over statehood bid,” *The Times of Israel* (Israel), August 2, 2012. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-prepares-for-showdown-over-statehood-bid>)

44. Raphael Ahren, “Israel says it will free prisoners, let Palestinians exploit Gaza gas field, if Abbas abandons UN statehood bid,” *The Times of Israel* (Israel), August 5, 2012. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/jerusalem-intensifies-carrot-and-stick-efforts-to-prevent-palestinian-un-statehood-bid>)

45. “Report: Netanyahu to release prisoners if UN bid scrapped,” *Ma'an News Agency* (West Bank), August 6, 2012. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120814174707/www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=510272>)

46. “Abbas says going to UN even if it conflicts with others’ interests,” *Ma'an News Agency* (West Bank), August 8, 2012. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120814172538/www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=510868>)

47. Elior Levy, “Arab League to present UN with new PA bid?” *Ynet* (Israel), August 14, 2012. (<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4268555,00.html>)

48. “Palestinian’s UN recognition quest on hold,” *Associated Press*, August 28, 2012. (<https://www.foxnews.com/world/palestinians-un-recognition-quest-on-hold>)

49. “Palestinian Abbas says has backing for new U.N. upgrade push,” *Reuters*, September 5, 2012. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-statehood/palestinian-abbas-says-has-backing-for-new-u-n-upgrade-push-idUSBRE88418A20120905>)

50. “Fatah leadership affirms UN bid,” *Ma'an News Agency* (West Bank), September 17, 2012. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120923031737/www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=520797>)

Nevertheless, PLO official Saeb Erekat said the Palestinians were expecting to garner between 150 and 170 votes for their resolution.<sup>51</sup>

In his September 27 speech to the UN General Assembly, Abbas said the Palestinians had “begun intensive consultations with various regional organizations and Member States aimed at having the General Assembly adopt a resolution considering the State of Palestine as a non-Member State of the United Nations during this session.”<sup>52</sup>

In the weeks that followed, the Palestinian issue was given relatively short shrift thanks to the U.S. election cycle and the civil war in Syria. But November 29 remained the target date.

On October 15, then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice warned that the Palestinian bid would “jeopardize the peace process and complicate efforts to return the parties to direct negotiations.”<sup>53</sup> The following day, Abbas sent a letter to President Barack Obama vowing to return to negotiations “after obtaining international recognition.”<sup>54</sup> Days later, Abbas told reporters that the Palestinian UN bid “is not a substitute for negotiations. We are in need of negotiations to solve the final status of issues.”<sup>55</sup>

On October 30, Reuters reported that the Palestinians had “launched a diplomatic blitz aimed at garnering a strong majority for a vote granting them non-member statehood at the United Nations slated for next month.”<sup>56</sup> A PLO official said the Palestinians expected “a minimum of 12 votes” from the European Union “and maybe up to 15, as some [EU member states] are not yet decided.” On October 31, Palestinian official Mohammad Shtayyeh left for Denmark, Sweden, and Finland to lobby for the upcoming bid. Palestinian envoys also went to Germany, Austria, and the United Kingdom, according to the Associated Press.<sup>57</sup> Writing in *The Telegraph*, PLO official Nabil Shaath urged the United Kingdom to endorse the Palestinian UN bid.<sup>58</sup>

On November 1, Egypt’s foreign minister called on Spain and France to support the Palestinian initiative. In addition, Abbas met with Kuwait’s ambassador to Jordan to discuss the maneuver.<sup>59</sup> Around the same time,

51. Jodi Rudoren, “Year After Effort at U.N., New Aim for Palestinians,” *The New York Times*, September 20, 2012. (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/21/world/middleeast/palestinians-aim-for-nonmember-state-status-at-united-nations-general-assembly.html>)

52. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations, *Statement Before the UN General Assembly Sixty-seventh Session General Debate*, September 27, 2012. ([http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/PS\\_en.pdf](http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/PS_en.pdf))

53. “U.S. says Palestinian status bid jeopardizes peace process,” *Reuters*, October 15, 2012. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/15/us-palestinians-status-usa-idUSBRE89E15P20121015>)

54. “Abbas to Obama: Talks with Israel after U.N. Statehood Vote,” *Naharnet* (Lebanon), October 16, 2012. (<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/57309>)

55. Noah Browning, “Abbas says ready for peace talks if U.N. recognition bid succeeds,” *Reuters*, October 24, 2012. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-israel-negotiations/abbas-says-ready-for-peace-talks-if-u-n-recognition-bid-succeeds-idUKBRE89N12C20121024>)

56. Noah Browning and Ali Sawafta, “Palestinians lobby for convincing win in U.N. vote,” *Reuters*, October 30, 2012. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-palestinians-un-statehood/palestinians-lobby-for-convincing-win-in-u-n-vote-idUKBRE89T11620121030>)

57. Mohammed Daraghme, “Palestinian PM threatens to quit over cash crunch,” *Associated Press*, October 31, 2012. (<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-palestinian-pm-threatens-to-quit-over-cash-crunch-2012oct31-story.html>)

58. Nabeel Shaath, “Britain must atone for its sins in Palestine,” *The Telegraph* (UK), October 31, 2012. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/palestinianauthority/9645925/Britain-must-atone-for-its-sins-in-Palestine.html>)

59. “الرئيس يبحث مع سفير الكويت التوجه للأمم المتحدة” [The president speaks with the Kuwaiti ambassador about going to the United Nations], *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), November 1, 2011. (<https://web.archive.org/web/20121103022339/www.maannews.net/arb/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=533132>)

Norway was reportedly helping draft the resolution for the Palestinians.<sup>60</sup> Russia also reportedly helped plan the Palestinian bid.<sup>61</sup>

With the U.S. elections over on November 7, Abbas congratulated Obama on winning a second term and urged him to “stand by the Palestinian decision to gain a non-member state status in the United Nations.”<sup>62</sup> Agence France-Presse quoted PLO official Saeb Erekat as saying, “We did [Obama] a favor [by delaying the UN bid until after the U.S. elections] and we hope he will remember that.”<sup>63</sup>

On November 8, the Palestinians began circulating a draft resolution to upgrade their status.<sup>64</sup> An Arab League official revealed that 51 states were still undecided on the matter.<sup>65</sup> The numbers fluctuated over the following weeks, but it was clear the Palestinians had a numerical advantage.

On November 29, 2012, 65 years after the United Nations called for a partition plan (which the Palestinians rejected) in favor of a State of Palestine and a State of Israel, the United Nations voted again. This time, 138 countries voted in favor of a Palestinian state. Only nine voted against. The only real surprises were abstentions by Germany and the United Kingdom.

The vote had no real impact. The Security Council was (and still is) the only UN entity empowered to confer official recognition of statehood. Still, the vote was a clear sign that the Palestinians had taken the initiative.

Seeking to regain the upper hand, the Obama administration launched a new peace process in the spring of 2013. Led by Secretary of State John Kerry and diplomat Martin Indyk, the administration pressured Israel to make concessions on borders, Jerusalem, and settlements. The major demand to the Palestinians was to halt their UN bid.

The Palestinians acquiesced to talks but vowed to continue to study steps to join UN treaties and bodies as leverage.<sup>66</sup> In November 2013, the Palestinian Monetary Authority announced it had obtained membership in the International Association of Deposit Insurers.<sup>67</sup> PLO official Nabil Shaath also warned that the Palestinians could use the “weapon” of claims against Israel in the International Criminal Court (ICC) — a move that

60. “US, EU urge Abbas to postpone UN bid,” *Ynet* (Israel), April 11, 2012. (<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4300896,00.html>)

61. “Erekat: Russia supports Palestinian UN bid,” *Ynet* (Israel), June 11, 2012. (<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4301966,00.html>)

62. “Abbas Congratulates Obama for Wining Presidential Election,” *Palestinian News & Info Agency* (West Bank), November 7, 2012. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121111071539/http://english.wafa.ps/index.php?action=detail&id=21001>)

63. “Erakat hopes for Palestinian statehood in 4 years,” *Daily News Egypt* (Egypt), November 8, 2012. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121111051628/http://dailynewsegyp.com/2012/11/08/erakat-hopes-for-palestinian-statehood-in-4-years>)

64. “Palestinians circulate resolution that would raise status at UN to non-member observer state,” *Associated Press*, November 8, 2012. (<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/11/08/palestinians-circulate-resolution-that-would-raise-status-at-un-to-non-member>)

65. “Official: 51 states ‘undecided’ over Palestinian UN bid,” *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), November 9, 2012. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20121125124239/www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=535506>)

66. “PLO studies steps to join UN treaties, bodies,” *Ma’an News Agency* (West Bank), January 3, 2013. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130126050052/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=553276>)

67. “Palestine Obtains Full Membership Status in the International Association of Deposit Insurers (IADI),” *Palestinian News Network* (West Bank), November 14, 2013. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20131116022640/http://english.pnn.ps/index.php/international/6156-palestine-obtains-full-membership-status-in-the-international-association-of-deposit-insurers-iadi>)

gained support from several prominent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and continues to have their endorsement today.<sup>68</sup>

Abbas himself threatened that if the Palestinians do not “obtain our rights through negotiations, we have the right to go to international institutions.”<sup>69</sup> PLO official Hanan Ashrawi warned in April 2014 that the Palestinians were ready to join 16 international agencies.<sup>70</sup> “Everything is in place and will be set in motion,” she claimed. In December, PLO official Saeb Erekat told *Maan News Agency* that there were 63 multilateral entities the PLO sought to join.<sup>71</sup>

Israeli officials flagged the organizations that worried them: the ICC, the International Telecommunications Union, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the World Trade Organization, and Interpol. The concern was two-fold: that the Palestinians would join as a state outside of the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian framework, and that they would try to isolate Israel from organizations crucial to its commerce, security, or diplomacy.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, continued to initiate the process of gaining membership in small bodies, such as the International Olive Council (where the PLO ultimately gained membership in 2017).<sup>72</sup> In the case of the FIFA international soccer association, where the Palestinians were already members, the PLO sought to disqualify Israel from the organization.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, amidst stalled peace talks, Abbas signed letters of accession to 15 treaties and conventions.<sup>74</sup> According to the PLO, the list included the four Geneva conventions of August 12, 1949, and the first Additional Protocol; the Vienna Convention of Consular Relations; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Hague Convention (IV) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the United Nations Convention against Corruption; the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the

68. “Shaath: Palestine prepared to join more UN orgs,” *Maan News Agency* (West Bank), November 26, 2013. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20131205074121/http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=651372>)

69. “Abbas to act against Israel at UN if peace talks fail,” *Maan News Agency* (West Bank), December 3, 2013. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20170209062354/http://www.maannews.com/Content.aspx?id=653791>)

70. Catherine Philip, “Palestinians plan UN move to show up Washington,” *The Times* (UK), December 2, 2013. (<http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article3937380.ece>)

71. Author Name, “عريقات: سننوجه لـ63 منظمة دولية في حال طرح عطاءات استيطانية جديدة” [Erekat: We will go to 63 international organizations in the event of new settlement bids], *Maan News Agency* (West Bank), December 26, 2013. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140324070817/http://www.maannews.net/arb/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=660471>)

72. International Olive Council, Press Release, “A New IOC Member Country,” April 19, 2017. (<https://www.internationaloliveoil.org/827-a-new-ioc-member-country>)

73. Peter Beaumont, “Israel faces Fifa suspension over claims it discriminates against Palestinians,” *The Guardian* (UK), May 19, 2015. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/19/israel-faces-fifa-suspension-after-claims-it-discriminates-against-palestinians>)

74. Noah Browning, “U.S. looking for way forward in faltering Mideast peace talks,” *Reuters*, April 1, 2014. (<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinian-israel-usa/u-s-looking-for-way-forward-in-faltering-mideast-peace-talks-idUSBREA301ZE20140402>)

Crime of Apartheid; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>75</sup>

The Palestinians continued the Palestine 194 campaign, with mixed results. They signed 18 treaties at the end of 2014 and then scored more in 2018 in response to President Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital.<sup>76</sup> The campaign has since paused amid a Palestinian shift toward direct engagement with the Biden administration. But it could easily resume again. And if it does, there is little that opponents could do to stop it.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the bureaucratic and nonviolent nature of the Palestine 194 campaign, there was little opponents — even a superpower such as the United States — could do to stop it. This is because the Palestinians had generated support from many other UN member states, which have an equal voice in the General Assembly and in certain UN agencies.

In hindsight, what was remarkable about the campaign was that the Palestinians achieved some significant successes even though they objectively failed to meet the traditional legal standards for statehood set forth in the 1933 Montevideo Convention. The Palestinians’ failure to fully meet these standards was raised as recently as 2020 in submissions to the ICC by Austria, Australia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Uganda, and others.<sup>77</sup> But this concern did not derail their efforts.

Taiwan more clearly meets the criteria for statehood. This need not be the end goal of a U.S.-led campaign, but meeting that criteria should theoretically make a “Taiwan 194” campaign easier to execute. Of course, China will wield every possible tool and relationship it has cultivated to stymie such a campaign. But this is not necessarily a bad thing. If Beijing is forced to put out diplomatic fires related to Taiwan, it might have less energy to devote to other aggressive policies. Beijing will also find itself on the defensive and might even be forced to explain why Taiwan should not be included in these relatively innocuous organizations and treaties.

The following are recommendations for the United States to consider as it weighs the costs and benefits of a Taiwan 194 diplomatic campaign.

- 1. Build on current efforts and make clear who leads them.** On October 21, 2021, Secretary of State Antony Blinken called upon “all UN Member States to join us in supporting Taiwan’s robust, meaningful participation throughout the UN system and in the international community, consistent with our ‘one China’ policy,

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75. Palestine Liberation Organization, “Q&A: Palestine’s Accession to International Treaties,” April 2, 2014. (Archived version available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20140407094859/http://nad-plo.org/userfiles/file/fact%20sheets/Q&A%20Accession.pdf>)

76. Ruth Eglash and Carol Morello, “Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas moves to join International Criminal Court,” *The Washington Post*, December 31, 2014. ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-thanks-us-for-abstaining-on-security-council-resolution/2014/12/31/9b84cfa8-90d2-11e4-a412-4b735edc7175\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/israel-thanks-us-for-abstaining-on-security-council-resolution/2014/12/31/9b84cfa8-90d2-11e4-a412-4b735edc7175_story.html)); Eytan Halon, “Report: Palestinians apply unilaterally to 8 international treaties,” *The Jerusalem Post* (Israel), March 25, 2018. (<https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/report-palestinians-apply-for-membership-of-8-international-treaties-547010>)

77. Raphael Ahren, “Why the Palestinian case at The Hague took a big hit this past week,” *The Times of Israel* (Israel), February 21, 2020. (<https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-the-palestinian-case-at-the-hague-took-a-big-hit-this-week>)

which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances.”<sup>78</sup> Two days later, the State Department announced that it had participated in “a virtual forum on expanding Taiwan’s participation at the United Nations and in other international fora.” The participants included the U.S. acting principal deputy assistant secretary for international organizations; the deputy assistant secretary for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia; and two deputy assistant secretaries for international organizations.<sup>79</sup> These are important statements and efforts. However, it is still unclear who “owns” this portfolio. Identifying the official responsible for this effort will be crucial for its success.

- 2. Begin outreach to the 50 countries that already recognize Taiwan or maintain non-diplomatic relations to encourage them to expand their support.** The countries that actually maintain full relations are just too few and have no diplomatic heft.<sup>80</sup> Belize, Eswatini, and Haiti are not exactly diplomatic powerhouses. But nearly half of Europe, Asia, and the Americas have already risked Chinese ire by maintaining ties with Taiwan. Members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and Association of Southeast Asian Nations engage with Taiwan on one level or another. At the UN General Assembly, each of these potential votes counts the same as that of a superpower. From there, the United States, in concert with these key allies, must identify additional countries in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and eventually even in Africa that might support such an effort.
- 3. Enlist varying levels of support.** Countries will, of course, express concern about provoking mainland China and drawing Beijing’s ire. But supporting Taiwan’s membership or observer status in UN bodies would not cross Beijing’s red line of recognizing Taiwanese independence. Washington should stress that voting for Taiwanese membership in smaller UN organizations is not the same as recognizing Taiwanese independent statehood. There are gradations of support to consider.
- 4. Identify individual organizations and treaties with the fewest hurdles for application and admission.** The Palestinians understood that different treaties and international organizations have varying criteria, mechanisms, and decision makers governing how an applicant may join. For example, Switzerland is the depositary for the four Geneva Conventions; the Netherlands is the depositary for the Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War; and the UN secretary-general is the depositary for various other treaties. The United States and Taiwan should pay careful attention to these criteria, mechanisms, and decision makers, prioritizing those with the fewest hurdles.

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78. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, U.S. Department of State, Press Statement, “Supporting Taiwan’s Participation in the UN System,” October 26, 2021. (<https://www.state.gov/supporting-taiwans-participation-in-the-un-system>). For more on the “one China” policy, see: “What Is the U.S. ‘One China’ Policy, and Why Does it Matter?” *Center on Strategic and International Studies*, January 13, 2017. (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-us-one-china-policy-and-why-does-it-matter>). For more on the Taiwan Relations Act, see: Richard C. Bush, “The Taiwan Relations Act,” *Testimony Before the U.S. House International Relations Committee*, April 21, 2004. (<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-taiwan-relations-act>). For more on the three Joint Communiqués, see: “Shanghai Communiqué,” *Taiwan Documents Project*, accessed January 24, 2022. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communiqué01.htm>); “Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations,” *Taiwan Documents Project*, accessed January 24, 2022. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communiqué02.htm>); “Joint Communiqué on Arms Sales to Taiwan,” *Taiwan Documents Project*, accessed January 24, 2022. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communiqué03.htm>). For more on the Six Assurances, see: “The ‘Six Assurances’ to Taiwan,” *Taiwan Documents Project*, accessed January 24, 2022. (<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/assurances.htm>)

79. U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, Media Note, “U.S. – Taiwan Working Group Meeting on International Organizations (IO Talks),” October 23, 2021. (<https://www.state.gov/u-s-taiwan-working-group-meeting-on-international-organizations-io-talks>)

80. Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Diplomatic Allies,” accessed January 24, 2022. (<https://www.mofa.gov.tw/en/AlliesIndex.aspx?n=DF6F8F246049F8D6&sms=A76B7230ADF29736>)

- 5. Focus on organizations where Taiwan is a recognized world leader in the field.** Taiwan demonstrated significant healthcare expertise in its response to COVID-19 and was a net supplier of healthcare support to less prepared nations. While Taiwan enjoyed non-voting observer status at the World Health Organization (WHO) from 2009 to 2016, a period of relatively warm ties between China and Taiwan, Beijing has since leveraged its multilateral might to exclude Taiwan from WHO-related meetings. Similarly, Taiwan's technical expertise in telecommunications and in manufacturing microchips and other electronics make it a natural fit for roles in the International Telecommunications Union, the International Electrotechnical Commission, and the International Standards Organization, the three most important international standards-setting organizations. Responsible nations would find it most difficult to oppose Taiwan's representation in these agencies, even under Chinese pressure. A natural first target might be securing Taiwanese participation during the WHO's next annual agenda-setting meeting in May 2022. Washington should also engage Taipei to determine which other international organizations Taiwan seeks to join, based on its own assessment of the value it brings to the table.
- 6. For Taiwan, simply joining treaties can yield important wins.** When the Palestinians announced their application to 15 international instruments in April 2014, the ones they selected were all treaties, not organizations. The Palestinians understood that joining certain UN agencies could trigger U.S. defunding provisions that would engender more opposition than would their joining a treaty with little or no budget. China would likely find it harder to stop Taiwanese applications to join treaties that do not have associated organizations and budgets. The United States should encourage this approach.
- 7. Recognize the value in incremental progress.** The Palestinians knew that Israeli concern about their joining international organizations and treaties varied based on the organization or treaty in question. After learning hard lessons from the UNESCO debacle, the Palestinians began by applying to organizations where their membership would prompt less alarm in Jerusalem. This afforded them a level of success. The United States and Taiwan should consider a similar strategy. Admittedly, China wields significant influence at the United Nations; Beijing may be able to stymie efforts in this arena. Thus, the focus should not be on lesser organizations but rather on organizations where Taiwan's value to the group would provide tangible benefits.
- 8. Try to negotiate or extract concessions from China.** The Palestinians engaged in their campaign not just to gain UN membership but also to extract concessions from Israel along the way. Israel, for example, released Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a pause in the Palestinian UN campaign. The United States, in coordination with Taiwan, should look for similar leverage vis-a-vis Beijing. In the likely event that China refuses to negotiate, Washington should highlight that intransigence to isolate Beijing and to cast it as the aggressor.
- 9. Find outside NGO support.** The Palestinians found support from a number of international NGOs. For example, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International endorsed the Palestinian ICC application. There are almost certainly a number of NGOs willing to support Taiwanese application to certain agencies and treaties. To offer just one example, organizations concerned about flight safety might support a Taiwanese application to join the International Civil Aviation Organization. There are certainly others to consider.

The Palestinians wrote the playbook for entities seeking to elevate their international status or even to gain full recognition. The United States can learn from their victories and defeats to help Taiwan. In so doing, Washington can pursue another avenue to advocate for a longtime ally and compete in a soft-power diplomatic contest that China often dominates.

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**Jonathan Schanzer** is senior vice president for research at FDD, where he oversees the work of the organization's researchers and scholars. He previously worked as a terrorism finance analyst at the U.S. Department of the Treasury. He is the author of four books and more than a dozen monographs and chapters on the Middle East.

**Mark Montgomery** is senior director of FDD's Center on Cyber and Technology Innovation and is an FDD senior fellow. He previously served as executive director of the congressionally mandated Cyberspace Solarium Commission and as policy director for the Senate Armed Services Committee. He served for 32 years in the U.S. Navy, retiring as a rear admiral.

**Richard Goldberg** is an FDD senior advisor. He previously served as a White House National Security Council official, as deputy chief of staff and national security advisor for Senator Mark Kirk, as founding staff director of the bipartisan House U.S.-China Working Group, as chief of staff for Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner, and as a Navy reserve intelligence officer.

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