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Introduction

The complex, unofficial, and robust relationship between the United States and Taiwan has long been a major pillar of US foreign relations in Asia, yet the range of activities employed in maintaining this relationship has been considerably opaque. Per the “One China Policy,” a position held by both the Chinese Communists and the Nationalists on Taiwan that mandates countries recognize either Beijing’s People’s Republic of China (PRC) or Taipei’s Republic of China (ROC) as the sole legitimate government of all of China, the United States cut official ties with the ROC in favor of normalization with China in 1979. Despite this move, Congress quickly passed the Taiwan Relations Act a few months later, institutionalizing unofficial US-Taiwan economic and cultural relations, as well as the US role as Taiwan’s chief security guarantor. ¹ Taiwan has built upon this ambiguous, yet strong, foundation, developing a foreign policy strategy that focuses on ensuring US dedication to Taiwan and its interests, preventing abandonment by its crucial partner.

Since the United States is the key to preventing Communist takeover and preserving Taiwan’s democratic society, Taiwan has built a sophisticated influence network within the United States to hold the relationship together. While there are documented cases of Taiwan lobbying at the national level, my research breaks new ground by providing insight into Taiwan’s expansive system of subnational ties with US states and placing it within the context of Taiwan’s foreign policy and security goals. These subnational ties are powerful, yet understudied, and have resulted in many state decisionmakers expressing not only private support for Taiwan, but public support in the form of formal legislative resolutions, gubernatorial proclamations, and other official statements. The strength of subnational support for Taiwan in

¹ Zablocki 1979.
the United States, which is enabled by America’s federalist system, stands in stark contrast to the federal executive branch’s strict public adherence to the One China Policy and generally tepid, carefully calibrated support for the island. While Taiwan is not the only foreign country engaged in US subnational politics, it is widely considered the country most invested in relationships with subnational governments and is the only one to successfully encourage the vast majority of state governments to officially express their support for its well-being. Its only near competitor is Israel, who has done so at a much smaller scale incomparable with Taiwan’s successful subnational engagement and shares a similarly unofficial security alliance relationship with the United States.

The question that this work seeks to answer is: why does Taiwan invest in these ties with state governments, and what are the political and/or national security returns Taiwan receives from these subnational relationships? Do they merely serve Taiwan’s economic and domestic political and interests, with only superficial impact on its security relationship with the US, or are these subnational ties they part of a sustained, holistic campaign to secure greater US security support? I argue the latter, positing that state governments are an integral part of Taiwan’s foreign policy towards the US. Taiwan’s relationships with these subnational governments are its solution to how it can bind the United States closer to Taiwan and its interests despite the complex and unofficial nature of the US-Taiwan relationship. Taiwan’s strategic use of subnational ties to bolster America’s support for Taiwan, each state tethering the whole of the United States the way the Lilliputians tether Gulliver in *Gulliver’s Travels*, is a process I call *subnational tethering*.

This analysis of Taiwan’s relationship with US states builds upon existing work on alliance theories, the roles state governments play in foreign relations, as well as Taiwan’s
foreign policy in general. The bulk of my research is supported through analysis of pro-Taiwan resolutions and proclamations in all 50 states, the full results of which can be found in the Appendix. This work is supplemented with interviews with state-level officials. The result of this analysis not only sheds light on Taiwan’s subnational tethering of the US, but also demonstrates an effective potential tool that countries can use to influence the foreign policy of another nation from the grassroots.

This paper first gives an overview of existing academic work pertaining to three relevant bodies of literature: alliance theory, Taiwan’s foreign policy, and the role of subnational governments in foreign relations. After this, the paper examines Taiwan’s relationship with US states and analyzes the public outcomes of Taiwan’s subnational tethering, including pro-Taiwan resolutions and gubernatorial proclamations. Then, analysis turns to case studies of several states that illustrate major successes and failures in subnational tethering. In conclusion, I explain how Taiwan’s case can be applied more broadly to states seeking to influence the foreign policy of another state and suggest directions for future research on this topic.

**Alliances in Theory**

The US-Taiwan relationship is a de facto alliance, despite having no official ties or formal defense treaty. The document that most institutionalizes this relationship is the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). This is a unique federal law that binds the United States to Taiwan’s survival by explicitly stating that attempts to forcefully unite Taiwan into the mainland of China would be “of grave concern to the United States,” as well as explicitly delineating continued support of Taiwan’s defense through weapons sales and US military preparedness to intervene.2

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2 Zablocki 1979.
This, coupled with the ROC’s longstanding strategic and ideological alignment and mutual security cooperation with Washington throughout both World War II and the Cold War, surpasses mere strategic alignment in creating the de facto alliance framework that governs US-Taiwan relations.

Glenn Snyder’s seminal tome on alliances in a bi/multipolar system, *Alliance Politics*, provides a useful framework for analyzing this relationship. He describes the “alliance security dilemma,” in which states worry about being either abandoned or entrapped in conflict by their ally. In an alliance in which there are asymmetrical levels of dependence, the more dependent partner will fear abandonment, whereas the other will consistently fear entrapment.³

The Taiwan Relations Act avoids US entrapment by not explicitly requiring the US to defend Taiwan militarily. Therefore, the discussion of abandonment is most salient to this paper. To prevent abandonment, an ally will most likely tighten its relationship with its partner to increase the perceived advantages of said alliance, for example, by publicly expressing strong commitment to the alliance relationship. Additionally, a state will likely seek a tighter alliance when the adversary becomes more menacing, but will seek more autonomy when it does not feel threatened. This last point can be seen explicitly in Taiwan’s relationship with US states, as there has been a bigger push for US state governments to pass pro-Taiwan resolutions during Tsai Ying-wen’s presidency than during Ma Ying-jeou’s. Since Tsai’s ascendancy to the presidency, Beijing has increased military and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan due to its concerns over the pro-independence leanings of Tsai’s political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP),

³ Snyder 1997, 181, 188.
whereas Ma’s party, the KMT, is generally more pro-unification. According to Snyder, this increased Chinese pressure causes Tsai’s government to seek a tighter alliance with the US.4

However, Snyder’s alliance theories on abandonment and dependence are complicated by the fact that they are set in a multipolar or bipolar system in which a state has plausible alternative allies, a system that is far removed from the unipolar international system that has developed since the fall of the Soviet Union. Fortunately, Stephen M. Walt fills this gap by providing analysis of alliances within a unipolar system, which is a system defined by one state controlling “a disproportionate share of the politically relevant resources within the system…[implying] that the single superpower faces no ideological rival of equal status or influence.” In such a system, the unipole, without any great power rival to counter its actions, has considerable flexibility in its actions and is likely to align with states with which it shares a like-minded ideology instead of a shared adversary as under the bipolar system. However, unlike in the multi/bipolar system described by Snyder, concern over the credibility of US commitment is intensified, since the US does not have as much urgent need for alliances in this system. Therefore, smaller states must exert themselves more to maintain US security commitments, without the threat of realignment to incentivize corresponding US dedication. The overall impact of the unipolar system is that the alliance security dilemma of abandonment and entrapment is heavily skewed in favor the unipole, wherein it has little fear of entrapment, yet weaker allies have enhanced fears not only of abandonment, but entrapment by the unipole as well.5

Walt’s work on unipolarity and alliances helps frame today’s US-Taiwan relationship within the current Asian system, which remains unipolar but increasingly contains shades of

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4 Snyder 1997, 183–84.
bipolarity as China rises. The US, as the unipole without any large imminent threat, is driven by ideology and strategy, whereas Taiwan faces imminent and persistent danger across the Taiwan Strait. Without alternative security guarantors, Taiwan is exceedingly dependent on the US for protection without any of the corresponding entrapment fears on the US side due to both the freedom granted to it as unipole and the careful wording of the TRA. Because of this, we see Taiwan working very hard in attempts to bind itself closer to the US and prevent abandonment, utilizing ideological alignment, public displays of commitment, and economics in its pursuit of strong US support. I will illustrate that subnational tethering, which is the idea that country A can influence country B’s foreign policy in its favor through engagement with country B’s subnational governments, is an effective tool Taiwan uses for binding itself closer to the United States to prevent abandonment.

**Taiwan’s Diplomacy**

It has been almost three-quarters of a century since Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Party retreated to Taiwan after his forces were defeated by Mao Zedong’s Communists, moving the capital of the Republic of China from Nanjing to Taipei. Today, the democratized descendant of this Republic of China on Taiwan floats isolated in the Western Pacific, with barely a handful of diplomatic allies and with the Communist government in Beijing looming over it threateningly, eager to finally unite the Chinese nation by bringing the island under its rule. Taiwan’s democratization and the subsequent decline of “Chinese” identity felt on the island has exacerbated tensions. Taiwan is an island under constant threat, which shapes its foreign policy.

As established earlier, Taiwan relies on the US for security, but it remains one of the only existentially imperiled countries without a defense alliance. China has refused to renounce the use of force as a tool for unifying Taiwan with the mainland, and has, on several occasions, shot
missiles over the island to make this point. Due to this danger, as well as Taiwan’s small size, diplomacy has been a vital tool for Taiwan’s national security. Taiwan lobbies foreign governments for defense-specific initiatives and aid, as well as to raise Taiwan’s international profile and seek increased acknowledgement and acceptance of Taiwan as an entity wholly distinct from the People’s Republic of China.6

An important aspect of Taiwan’s diplomatic strategy is its economic diplomacy. According to the RAND Corporation, “Taiwan is a trading state,” and these economic connections of interdependence are a source of its political influence abroad.7 The strength of Taiwan’s economic diplomacy is partly due to the fact that Taiwan’s semi-official relations with most countries are limited to the economic and cultural sphere, due to the restrictions on what diplomatic interactions China deems acceptable.8 However, Taiwan has taken to these vague guidelines with great muster, benefiting from increased economic globalization and directing its political aims through ostensibly economic mechanisms. This “economic statecraft” was pioneered by the first democratically elected president of Taiwan, Lee Tenghui. Lee utilized Taiwan’s economic might to increase its significance. An example of this is in Taiwan’s rapid increase of trade with, financial assistance to, and import of labor from Southeast Asia, which resulted in the rapid proliferation of intergovernmental political and economic relations.9

The only existing in-depth study of Taiwan’s subnational foreign relations looks at Taiwan’s relationship with Japan. Written by Nicholas Thomas and Brad Williams, it details the evolution of relations between the Republic of China and Japan after Japan severed ties in 1972,

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6 Chen 2002, 9.
7 Swaine and Mulvenon 2001, 7.
8 Chen 2002, 40.
focusing especially on Taiwan’s encouragement of its cities and towns to develop formal relations with corresponding entities in Japan. This was done in large part because Japan is a close ally of the United States. According to Thomas and Williams’ interviews with Taiwanese subnational government officials, the central government encourages transnational subnational relations to raise Taiwan’s international profile. From this we can deduce that Taiwan sees foreign subnational governments as strategically important.\textsuperscript{10}

Most notably, Thomas and Williams illustrate the power of subnational governments on national relations. For example, northeastern Taiwanese cities and southern Japanese communities were the main impetus behind a joint fisheries agreement between the two nations. Another example pertains to Taiwan’s aid to the prefectures impacted by the 2011 earthquake. Taiwan donated the most money per capita, yet, to appease China, Japan did not thank Taiwan at the time. The affected prefectures, which recorded high-levels of public support for Taiwan due to the donations, expressed their fury at this slight, prompting the next prime minister to publicly declare Taiwan a friend of Japan and announce his appreciation for its donations, and to decry the previous government for not doing so.\textsuperscript{11}

Taiwan’s engagement with Japan at a subnational level has had tangible positive impacts on Taiwan-Japan relations. It has consciously bolstered relations with Japanese subnational governments to bring Japan and Taiwan closer together, furthering its overall goals of security and a higher international profile. It is no surprise, therefore, that these subnational relations have been both more robust and more successful in America, Taiwan’s principal security guarantor and a country with a federalist system.

\textsuperscript{10} Thomas and Williams 2017, 119–21.
\textsuperscript{11} Thomas and Williams 2017, 128–30.
Since we have established that Taiwan sees subnational governments as useful for its foreign policy, it is important to show the importance of subnational governments in America’s foreign relations. Most international trade promotion has been dispersed among America’s 50 states, which have significant autonomy and power within the federalist system.\textsuperscript{12} This decentralization is what gives states the flexibility to engage significantly in foreign relations.

State foreign relations can come in several forms, from trade delegations to legislative resolutions and the establishment of sister-state relationships.\textsuperscript{13} One of the most notable forms is state competition for foreign direct investment. State gubernatorial and legislative officials actively woo foreign investment to provide goods to their citizens, which, in turn, helps with reelection.\textsuperscript{14} One notable trailblazer in US gubernatorial foreign relations is President Jimmy Carter when he was governor of Georgia. He has said that he spent one fourth of his time as governor recruiting FDI for his state and encouraging countries to import Georgian goods.\textsuperscript{15}

The role of state governments in courting FDI is a function of the US’s federalist system. While the federal government is involved in promoting exports, it is not involved in the pursuance of FDI. State governments have stepped in to fill this vacuum, acting as the primary trade ambassadors to lure foreign investors and bring dividends to their state.\textsuperscript{16}

Subnational governments also have a large role in raising awareness of various international issues. They do this through education (school curricula, museums, cultural

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\textsuperscript{12} Fry, Earl H. 2009, 297.
\textsuperscript{13} McMillan 2012, 67, 78.
\textsuperscript{14} Fry, Earl H. 2009, 306.
\textsuperscript{15} Fry, Earl H. 2009, 306.
\textsuperscript{16} McMillan 2012, 7.
celebrations), research, and lobbying (statements, resolutions, or direct appeals to influence the national government). Some states take aggressive postures, such as criticizing other countries for human rights violations or banning the sale of products from certain countries to send signals of their disapproval. There are a wide range of activities that subnational governments are engaged in outside of the purview of the federal government that make up America’s foreign affairs, which is why it is important to look at how countries like Taiwan utilize subnational ties in their foreign policy towards the US.

Furthermore, states have grown in capacity and clout over the 20th century. Governorships have offices in Washington DC, which allows them to influence the federal bureaucracies as well as members of Congress, including their own national representatives. This presence ensures that state governors’ priorities are being advocated at the national level, by allowing them to more directly pressure various interest groups, agencies, and members of Congress to take actions and positions that the state government promotes. Additionally, there is extensive foreign trade collaboration between the two levels of government. For example, members of Congress tend to assist their state’s governorships by helping them meet with foreign business leaders, changing federal trade agreement legislation to reflect their state’s interest, and establishing Free Trade Zones.

Increased worldwide economic interdependence gives state governments a strong incentive to be active in the United States’ relationships with other countries. Because of the high amount of state international relations activity, as well as their regular coordination with their

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18 McMillan 2012, 60, 64.
representatives in Washington, state governments are in a prime position to quietly affect a country’s overall foreign relations and foreign policy.

**Methodology**

In order to gauge Taiwan’s subnational tethering, I analyzed official public expressions of support for Taiwan in the form of resolutions and proclamations, interviewed legislators, bureaucrats, and other American officials involved in US subnational relations with Taiwan, and looked at Taiwan’s economic and trade relations with each state.

Economic relations with states is an important part of Taiwan’s relations with US state governments, since, as mentioned before, economic statecraft is a central part of Taiwan’s foreign policy. To analyze this, I went to publicly-available records of Taiwan’s FDI and trade relationship with each state, which can be found on Taiwan’s “embassy” website.

State resolutions are the most important part of my research. They illustrate Taiwan’s priorities in their relationship with the US and show the extent to which Taipei has successfully engaged with US state governments, since they are official expressions of pro-Taiwan sentiment. For this paper, I define “pro-Taiwan” as something that advocates for the US actively furthering Taiwan’s economic, political, security, and strategic interests, and/or that celebrates specific aspects of Taiwan, such as its democracy. Public, official pro-Taiwan expressions formalize Taiwan’s positive relationship with these states. In total, 44 states have passed pro-Taiwan resolutions in the last two decades, the majority of which have passed them in the last five years. These resolutions were obtained through searches on state legislature websites, looking for all bills mentioning Taiwan. I also looked at states whose congressional delegations sponsored pro-

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19 The word “embassy” is in quotations here due to the fact that Taiwan has no “official” diplomatic offices in the United States. However, it has offices that in form and function act as de facto embassies.
Taiwan resolutions, to provide a holistic picture of Taiwan’s engagement with states. These were similarly found through looking at Congress’s online portal.

Similarly, gubernatorial proclamations illustrate the strength of Taiwan’s engagement with states’ executive branch and are another indicator of official pro-Taiwan sentiment. When including proclamations alongside resolutions, 46 out of 50 states have adopted pro-Taiwan measures. The extent of each state’s pro-Taiwan sentiment has been compiled in the Appendix.

Interviews were necessary for fleshing out my analysis of Taiwan’s subnational tethering, since legislators especially could confirm my hypotheses and express their own rationales for sponsoring this legislation as well as provide backroom insight into Taiwan’s relations with subnational governments. Some legislators and bureaucrats were open and eager to discuss Taiwan with me, while others preferred to remain anonymous.

The combination of these research lenses provides an all-inclusive picture of Taiwan’s subnational tethering.

**How Taiwan Integrates US States into its Foreign Policy**

In a federalist nation like the United States, subnational governments can hold tremendous influence, a fact that Taiwan has recognized and expertly woven into its holistic foreign policy towards the US. According to Karla Jones, Director of the Task Forces on International Relations and Federalism at the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an influential organization for state legislators, no other diplomatic mission has been better at engaging with state governments than Taiwan.\(^{20}\) This engagement aligns US-Taiwan economic,

\(^{20}\) Karla Jones (Director of the Federalism and International Relations Task Force of ALEC). Interview about Taiwan’s relationship with US states. Spring 2018.
political, and security interests, and ties the US close to Taiwan from the grassroots up by encouraging passionate support for Taiwan throughout state governments across the America. By ensuring diffuse yet strong pro-Taiwan sentiment across the United States, Taiwan keeps itself bound tightly to the US, which serves its foreign policy goal of maintaining US protection to deter Beijing from attempting to absorb the island by force. Broad US support protects Taiwan’s status as a distinct unit separate from mainland China.

Taiwan’s ability to outcompete China in the US subnationally is enabled by America’s federalism. Unlike the federal executive branch, which is required to adhere to the federal government’s “One China Policy” that officially recognizes the People’s Republic of China government as the sole legitimate government of China, America’s states are not bound by federal foreign policy and therefore can freely engage with Taiwan or China as they choose.

Absent formal relations, Taiwan has developed an unparalleled foreign policy strategy that takes advantage of the United States’ federal system. Nancy Tucker, a former historian of US-China relations, says that Taiwan has the “most professional and skilled congressional relations staff of any foreign regime.” Taiwan has a well-oiled diplomatic machine that can deftly navigate “lobbying, publicity, public relations, and the courtship of interest groups.” She also notes that Taiwan, unlike China, shrewdly uses trade for their own public relations goals, widely publicizing every trade deal, no matter how small. “Taiwan, of course, very cleverly understood that allowing a congressman to announce that sort of deal, however small it be, ingratiated the congressman, who then owed one to Taiwan. It gained publicity for Taiwan, of a
favorable nature, in the district.” This illustrates something I have found in my own research: Taiwan uses economics to obtain political outcomes in its favor.21

Many state bureaucrats and politicians are aware of this strategy. I spoke to several directors of state trade offices in Taipei. The director of Idaho’s Asia Trade Office based in Taipei told me via email that “Taiwan has adopted a multi-channel approach for establishing more broad relationships with different levels of governments in the US which, generally speaking, is not much affected by the change of federal government.”22

Taiwan directly works with subnational politicians, educating them on how Taiwan benefits each state. As ALEC and many legislators have mentioned, including Representative Tom Taylor of Georgia, Taiwan is “highly proactive”23 in its engagement with legislators, and actively works with politicians on producing public, official declarations of the benefits of US-Taiwan relations and state government desires for a strengthening and deepening of the bilateral relationship.24 Taiwan’s success in this area illustrates effective subnational tethering.

The result of Taiwan’s subnational tethering comes in two primary forms: state legislative resolutions and gubernatorial proclamations. These two outcomes, which I will go into greater depth about in following sections, create a political environment that is pro-Taiwan throughout the United States, not merely in Washington DC. Each resolution or proclamation serves the purpose of committing America’s decisionmakers to the US-Taiwan relationship on the grounds of political ideological alignment, longstanding friendship, and trade and investment. This binds the whole of the US to Taiwan through each state capital.

22 Eddie Yen (Director of Idaho’s Asia Trade Office). “Email from Yen to Walker: Taiwan State-Level IR Research,” December 3, 2017.
23 Karla Jones (Director of the Federalism and International Relations Task Force of ALEC). Interview about Taiwan’s relationship with US states. Spring 2018.
24 Tom Taylor (Georgia State Representative). Phone interview. Spring 2018.
This successful promotion of pro-Taiwan sentiment at the state level has a direct impact on Washington. States do not live in a vacuum, and Taiwan knows this. As mentioned above, state politicians coordinate with their representatives in DC. This can come in the form of lobbying by governor offices in DC, as well as consultations between state and national legislators. According to Representative Taylor, he has had many conversations with Georgia’s Congressional delegation regarding the importance of the Taiwan-US relationship, and has worked with them on the Visa Waiver for Taiwanese citizens visiting the US, mutual driver’s license recognition between Georgia and Taiwan, and other policies, and that members of Congress do listen to their state legislatures.25

Speaker Gideon of Maine’s legislature goes even further in emphasizing the linkages between state and federal governments on foreign relations, stating that pro-Taiwan resolutions are passed explicitly to formally express the state’s position on international relations with national leadership as the intended audience. “I also support Taiwan’s commitment to democratic principles and believe it is important to stand in solidarity with them…we do from time to time communicate to our federal leaders through Joint Resolutions likes this one to ensure that our values are communicated to leaders in Washington, DC.”26 This shows that not only do state politicians communicate and coordinate with national politicians on foreign relations, but these official expressions via resolutions are messages aimed towards the federal government. These pro-Taiwan resolutions are a state’s foreign policy.

Instead of two dichotomized layers of government (federal and state), the reality is that subnational governments communicate frequently with their federal counterparts on many issues,

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25 Tom Taylor (Georgia State Representative). Phone interview. Spring 2018.
26 Sara Gideon (Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives). Private e-mail correspondence on “HP 1317 - Taiwan,” April 24, 2018.
including international relations. This symbiotic relationship, as well as the outsized role of state governments in US international trade, create the environment through which foreign policy positions can grow from the grassroots upwards, instead of merely being executed at the grasstops level. Therefore, Taiwan’s subnational tethering strategy not only binds the US to Taiwan through America’s 50 state governments, but also is able to utilize the robust state-federal relationships to indirectly exert influence on US national policies as well.

The following map gives an overview by illustrating the extent to which Taiwan’s engagement has penetrated both the federal and state governments, including the US Congress, state legislatures, and state governor’s offices. This paper does not seek to explain the variations in Taiwan’s relations with each state, but rather seeks to illustrate how significant state governments are to Taiwan’s foreign policy strategy.

![Map of Pro-Taiwan Activity](image)

*Figure 1: Overall Pro-Taiwan Activity*

I gave each state 1 point for each of the following 7 pro-Taiwan activities: passing a resolution that champions Taiwan joining international organizations, passing a resolution that encourages a bilateral US-Taiwan free trade agreement, passing a resolution that celebrates that
state’s sister state relationship with Taiwan (something enabled by Taiwan’s ambiguous status as a country or territory), gubernatorial proclamations mentioning the sister state relationship, gubernatorial proclamations celebrating Taiwan friendship or Taiwan National Day on 10/10, a Congressional sponsor of pro Taiwan legislation, and Congressional co-sponsorship. The darkness of each state reflects the breadth of pro-Taiwan activity in each state, with states with the highest number of points being darkest blue. For example, Arizona, Arkansas, and South Carolina, all of which have the maximum 7 points, have the biggest breadth of pro-Taiwan activity, from Congress to the state legislature to the governor’s mansion. Conversely, New York and Maryland, who only have had a Congressional co-sponsor for a pro-Taiwan bill, thereby garnering 1 point, and California and Minnesota, who have only lead sponsored pro-Taiwan legislation at the Congressional level, have not been penetrated by Taiwan’s holistic, multilevel engagement operation. That being said, despite the wide variation, the map clearly illustrates that every state has been involved in some pro-Taiwan activity.

The next map, below, demonstrates Taiwan’s successful subnational tethering only, without the Congressional indicators. Here, Arizona, Arkansas, and South Carolina all keep their top slots with 5 points each, and are joined by North Dakota and Connecticut. In these states,

**Figure 2: Subnational Pro-Taiwan Activity**
Taiwan’s engagement with state governments has resulted in success in every measured indicator, meaning that each has legislative resolutions and gubernatorial proclamations that support Taiwan in international organizations, a bilateral FTA, sister state relations with Taiwan, and Taiwan’s National Day. Furthermore, this map throws the weakness of Taiwan’s engagement with California, Minnesota, New York, and Maryland into sharper relief.

Taiwan has successfully persuaded 46 out of 50 American state governments to adopt public, official pro-Taiwan measures. While each state varies in terms of the breadth of pro-Taiwan activity, this ability to influence all but 4 states to take official positions that support Taiwan’s foreign policy interests is testament to the effectiveness of Taiwan’s subnational tethering operation. In order to provide a deeper examination of subnational tethering, the following analysis separates proclamations and resolutions and examines their inclusion of the pro-Taiwan indicators listed above. For the full dataset listing each state and the subnational tethering indicators each one fulfills, see the attached appendix.

**China and the States**

The vitality of Taiwan’s subnational tethering is especially remarkable since there no state has ever officially celebrated its relationship with China or any of its provinces. When it comes to subnational tethering activity, China isn’t even playing in the same league as Taiwan. Furthermore, while China does register complaints with state politicians for their pro-Taiwan activity, it is unwilling to follow up its words with punishment. According to Representative Taylor of Georgia, China is so economically invested in states that it rarely, if ever, punishes a state economically for its pro-Taiwan behavior. Economic growth is a leading factor that drives

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27 Tom Taylor (Georgia State Representative). Phone interview. Spring 2018.
China’s foreign policy, so the fact that they do not follow through in their anger over America’s subnational support for Taiwan is not surprising.\textsuperscript{28} Anything that undermines China’s economic growth would undermine its rise as a major power as well as the legitimacy of the regime in Beijing. However, by prioritizing economic growth in foreign policy at all cost, China is allowing Taiwan to develop robust subnational tethering that strengthens overall US support for Taiwan, thereby impeding Beijing’s goal of national unification. When it comes to close relations with US state governments, Taiwan is peerless, and China is not even in the game.

**Resolutions**

Resolutions are by far the most prevalent official pro-Taiwan action taken at the state level. 44 out of America’s 50 states have passed these resolutions by one or, usually, both chambers of the state’s legislature. These resolutions all closely resemble each other. This similarity in function and form across America is because each state’s nearest unofficial Taiwanese consulate (Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, or TECO) takes an active role in getting these resolutions introduced and passed, according to Representative Taylor and other legislators that prefer to remain anonymous.\textsuperscript{29}

The two common threads that run through every resolution is that each one compliments Taiwan’s democracy and lauds the economic relationship between that state and Taiwan. This reveals Taiwan’s focus on economic statecraft and ideological alignment in its strategy for increasing pro-Taiwan opinion in America. For example, in a recently passed resolution, Florida commends Tsai Ing-wen’s visit to Florida as “enhancing the bilateral relationship between the United States and Taiwan and strengthening the common value of democracy it shares with the

\textsuperscript{28} Norris 2016, 58–59.

\textsuperscript{29} Tom Taylor (Georgia State Representative). Phone interview. Spring 2018.
United States,” and refers to Taiwan as “a model of democratization for developing countries” while citing trade figures between the state and Taiwan, as well as trade between the US and Taiwan. Similarly, Arizona’s legislature cites specific data in US-Taiwan and Arizona-Taiwan trade, from which Taiwan imported $38.4 billion and $431 million in 2015, respectively, and applauds “Taiwan’s deepening democratization” and commends its 2016 election as “a testament to the strength and vitality of Taiwan’s democracy.”  

Aside from these ideological and economic through-lines, there are three major components of these resolutions that appear in different states. The most widespread and significant component, in terms of Taiwan’s foreign policy goals, is an appeal for the US to support Taiwan’s participation in international organizations. Taiwan’s goal is to be seen as distinct from the People’s Republic of China and as a contributing member of the international community. However, it is only recognized as a country or a legitimate government by a handful of small, developing countries. Therefore, participation in international organizations provides Taiwan with platforms to raise its international profile, something that Beijing aims to prevent. The US, as Taiwan’s biggest partner and the current unipole of the international system, is best equipped to help Taiwan gain access to these organizations, hence the emphasis on international organizations in these resolutions. 44 states have passed resolutions encouraging Taiwan’s participation in international organizations, illustrated in the map below, in which blue indicates a state where this component has been included in an adopted resolution. The exact international organization varies depending on the time of passage, illustrating Taiwan’s focus at the time, but in the last decade they generally include participation in the World Health Assembly, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the International Criminal Police

30 Bracy 2018.
31 Lesko 2017.
Organization (INTERPOL). Participation in these organizations would raise Taiwan’s international status by integrating it into vital international coordination apparatuses and allowing it to contribute to the international community.

The second major component found in many resolutions is a mention of Taiwan’s role as a “sister state.” Taiwan’s ambiguous status has allowed it to establish sister state relationships that are managed with the full force of Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After all, if Taiwan is a province of China, then Beijing cannot argue against this course of action. As such, Taiwan spends a considerable effort highlighting the strength of these sister state relationships, including some states, like Connecticut, that regularly commemorate this relationship. Taiwan’s engagement with states as a “sister state” has resulted in 32 states passing resolutions that include mentions of the strength of their sister state relationship with Taiwan. No state, however, has passed a resolution commemorating the strength of their sister state relationship with any PRC province.

32 Johnson 2017; Bracy 2018; Government Administrations and Elections Committee 2018.
33 Johnson 2017; Bracy 2018; Lesko 2017; Government Administrations and Elections Committee 2018.
The third major component of these resolutions is related to the aforementioned consistent theme of economic relations: The pursuance of a free trade agreement. 36 states have passed resolutions including appeals for a bilateral free trade agreement between the United States and Taiwan. The resolutions seek further deepening of the US-Taiwan economic relationship through a free trade agreement, citing robust existing economic relations.\textsuperscript{34} Such an agreement would bind the US and Taiwan together even further, increasing Americans’ stake in Taiwan’s economy. Widespread subnational support for such an agreement is thus an important tool in Taiwan’s diplomacy toolkit in strengthening the US-Taiwan relationship.

\textsuperscript{34} Vo 2017; Bracy 2018; Johnson 2017; Government Administrations and Elections Committee 2018.
At the bottom of every one of these pro-Taiwan resolutions is a statement mandating that a copy of the resolution be sent to the closest TECO and usually at least one of the following: The President of the United States, the Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, members of the state’s Congressional delegation, and the US Secretary of State. This short section demonstrates how Taiwan, in coordination with US state governments, seeks to pressure the federal government to adopt pro-Taiwan policies, using subnational tethering to tie America closely to Taiwan and ensure continued US support for Taiwan’s well-being.

The last map for resolutions, below, gives a summation of the extent to which the above components have been adopted in resolutions each state, with dark blue representing that all three have been adopted. These resolutions are a key part of Taiwan’s holistic foreign policy towards the US. Through this subnational tethering strategy, Taiwan can commit states to overtly pro-Taiwan positions, creating a pervasive pro-Taiwan grassroots environment, while also utilizing these robust subnational relations with state governments to pressure the federal government to take pro-Taiwan actions.
Gubernatorial proclamations are another method through which Taiwan seeks to create a robust pro-Taiwan subnational environment. These proclamations are rarer than state resolutions, but they do illustrate the successes of Taiwan’s subnational tethering in that Taiwan is able to bind the US close to Taiwan through the chief executives of states in addition to state legislatures. As mentioned earlier, governors have an important role in America’s international trade, acting as a state’s leading trade ambassador and leading the pursuance of FDI. In addition to this, governors operate offices in DC that convey the governor’s positions on issues to both Congress and the federal executive branch. Governors, already significantly empowered by America’s federalist system, have a vast array of tools at their disposal for influencing national policies in their state’s favor, and can thereby influence the federal government on issues pertaining to foreign policy and international trade.
The two major components of these proclamations are the celebration of the anniversary of the Republic of China (Taiwan) on October 10th, also known as Double Ten Day, and celebrating sister state relationships. Nine states, Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Idaho, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Carolina have produced proclamations that include the former, and all of those but Idaho include the latter. The commemoration of sister state relationships is the one major component that is found in both proclamations and resolutions. However, the celebration of Double Ten Day is especially notable in that these governors are committing their states to the official celebration of another country’s equivalent of an Independence Day. No state celebrates any other nation’s national holiday, which underscores the extent to which Taiwan’s subnational tethering has successfully influenced the entirety of state governments towards overtly pro-Taiwan sentiment, from the legislative branches to the executive branches.

![Figure 7: Gubernatorial Proclamations for Taiwan National Day](image)

### Deepest Subnational Tethering: Connecticut

Connecticut stands out in terms of the breadth and depth of its subnational support for Taiwan. Connecticut has been consistently active in supporting Taiwan subnationally. While

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35 Hutchinson 2017; Napolitano 2005; Bentley 2016.
many states have passed repeated resolutions re-emphasizing their support for Taiwan, Connecticut has passed resolutions almost every year celebrating its relationship with Taiwan, and its governors have published proclamations celebrating the relationship. The frequency and breadth of these expressions of pro-Taiwan sentiment illustrate how Taiwan’s subnational tethering can influence the long-term political culture of a state, instilling pro-Taiwan sentiment that endures despite fluctuations in a legislature’s membership. The political party in power can change, and legislators can come and go, but pro-Taiwan political culture in a state’s capital can endure all these changes.

**Most Holistically Pro-Taiwan (Subnational and National): Texas and Florida**

Texas and Florida not only fulfill all the pro-Taiwan resolution indicators (joining international organizations, supporting a bilateral FTA, and celebrating sister state relationships), but they also have some of the most passionate national champions.

Texas and Florida have sturdy relationships with Taiwan both subnationally and nationally. Members of Congress, including Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, are vocal supporters of Taiwan, and both states have repeatedly passed resolutions that emphasize the pro-Taiwan positions described in this paper. In addition, despite Chinese complaints, Taiwan’s presidents have visited both states and had highly publicized meetings with both national and subnational Texan and Floridian politicians, including governors who spoke openly about their pro-Taiwan sentiment. During these events, both sides highlighted the economic and ideological alignment between Taiwan and the United States, just like the pro-Taiwan state resolutions and

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37 Bracy 2018; Vo 2017.
38 Reuters Staff 2017; “Ma given Warm Welcome on Visit to Formosa Plastics Texas Plant” 2016; “PHOTO RELEASE: Rubio Welcomes Taiwanese President To Miami - Press Releases - U.S. Senator for Florida, Marco Rubio” n.d.
proclamations. These events illustrate the high level of support for Taiwan that has been engendered both subnationally and nationally in Florida and Texas, and the success of subnational tethering in these two states.

**Outliers Spotlight: California and New York**

California and New York are both major outliers, as highly populated, economically influential states with large Asian populations. Their lack of subnational pro-Taiwan sentiment nullifies any arguments that successful subnational tethering is simply the result of the strength of economic relations. Neither of these large, politically influential states show any signs of successful Taiwanese subnational tethering. Consider the map below from the website of Taiwan’s unofficial equivalent to a US embassy.\(^39\) This map details the amount of jobs that are supported by Taiwan in each state, signifying its economic activity in these states. New York, California, Texas, and Washington all have substantial economic relations with Taiwan, yet the latter two engage in subnational pro-Taiwan behavior, whereas the former two do not.

\(^{39}\) Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office 2018.

![Map of US showing jobs supported by Taiwanese investment and trade](image)
I initially suspected that this may be due to China’s oversized economic investment in these states, but when analyzing this map below (in pink) of each state in terms of the percentage of its GDP that comprises of trade with China, it is apparent that this is not the answer. Both Tennessee and Washington, which have high levels of trade dependence on China, like California, also have pro-Taiwan subnational activity. Furthermore, New York is less dependent on China economically than many states that champion Taiwan. Therefore, economic dependence on China cannot explain failures in subnational tethering.

![Trade in Goods with China as a % of State GDP](image)

**Figure 9: Trade in Goods with China as a % of State GDP**

The political influence of immigrant populations may be one answer to why these states have not expressed any official pro-Taiwan positions. Half of the Taiwanese-immigrant population in the United States lives in California, and New York is home of the second largest population of Taiwanese immigrants. However, Chinese immigrants are also most populous in both these states, and their numbers are significantly larger than those from Taiwan. However,

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40 Kopf 2017.
58% of Chinese immigrants are US citizens today, whereas 72% of Taiwanese immigrants are US citizens.\textsuperscript{41} Research has found that Taiwanese immigrants are more politically active, individually, than Chinese immigrants.\textsuperscript{42} This complicates the picture, as it is unclear whether Chinese population size or Taiwanese political activism is more influential in subnational politics. Therefore, more research into the exact political power of Chinese and Taiwanese immigrants in every state would be needed before one could make conclusions as to whether the success of subnational tethering is impacted by the political power of Chinese or Taiwanese immigrants. Since many states that are ardently pro-Taiwan have exceedingly small Asian American communities, my preliminary assumption is that this is not the explanatory variable.

Another potential explanatory variable could be partisanship. Several interviewees, who wished to remain anonymous, suggested that Taiwan has better relationships with the Republican Party than the Democratic Party. While both New York and California are staunchly Democratic states, other Democratic states have been reliably pro-Taiwan, including states like Washington that have substantial economic relationships with China. Therefore, this also cannot be a sole explanatory variable. Realistically, Taiwan’s failure in subnational tethering in these two states could be a combination of the above factors, as well as additional factors not considered here.

\textbf{A Harbinger of Things to Come?: West Virginia’s MoU with China}

Despite Taiwan’s demonstrable superiority in terms of relations with state governments so far, there are some potential signs of change. West Virginia used to annually pass resolutions championing Taiwan, especially its economic relationship. However, in 2018, West Virginia did not pass such a resolution. Instead, it opted to merely celebrate its sister-state relationship. The

\textsuperscript{41} McCabe 2012; Lopez, Ciluffo, and Patten 2017.
\textsuperscript{42} Lien 2010.
reasoning behind this is that the state was signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China and did not want to create friction that could upset this economic agreement. This could be a sign of an evolution in China’s subnational power in the United States. As China solidifies its power as an international economic heavyweight, it may be learning how to strengthen its own economic statecraft with US state governments.  

**Conclusion**

Taiwan outcompetes China subnationally by sophisticatedly integrating state governments into its foreign policy towards the United States. According to one interview, Taiwan is consistently present at the subnational level, whereas “China just doesn’t get the United States” and only sporadically engages with subnational governments. Taiwan has made subnational tethering an essential part of its foreign policy towards the US, as it seeks to create a omnipresent pro-Taiwan political environment at all levels of the US political system. It has been very successful in this goal. This strategy is significant because state governments coordinate with national leaders on international issues and have a large role in US international trade, and therefore are an integral part of US foreign relations. According to my interview with ALEC, “Congress listens to state lawmakers. They have a lot of influence, because they are often friends and former colleagues.” Therefore, Taiwan’s subnational tethering is a salient strategy for maintaining overall US support for Taiwan, its de facto ally.

Taiwan’s successful subnational tethering creates a potential model that countries can replicate not only within America, but in other countries as well. A country with official

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43 DeAeth 2018.
44 Anonymous interview with a staff member from a prominent organization for state legislators.
45 Karla Jones (Director of the Federalism and International Relations Task Force of ALEC). Follow-up Interview about Taiwan’s relationship with US states. Spring 2018.
diplomatic relations with the United States, unlike Taiwan, would face fewer political barriers to extracting official state government support, thereby increasing the likelihood of successful subnational tethering. This is an especially useful strategy for smaller countries, which may have trouble competing for foreign policy attention with larger powers at the national level. Federalism is undoubtedly a key enabler of this strategy in the US-Taiwan case, since it provides states not only with considerable autonomy and influence over America’s international trade, but also allows state governments to skirt the federal government’s One China policy. Outside of the United States, many countries have similar federalist systems of government, such as Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, and India. Federalist countries like these provide environments ripe for subnational tethering. Furthermore, as I emphasized in the literature review of Japan-Taiwan subnational relations, this strategy can be effective on the foreign policy of unitary governments as well. Regardless of the form of government, subnational governments are integral to governance in almost every society, making subnational tethering a potential, effective tool for influencing any country’s foreign policy through grassroots fomentation of support.

Taiwan’s relationship with US subnational governments deserves further research. For example, more work needs to be done to explain why states like California and New York have no discernible pro-Taiwan sentiment at the subnational level. One suggested line of research would be studying the political influence of Chinese and Taiwanese immigrants in each US state. Additionally, looking more deeply into the various methods of executing subnational tethering, such as paying for state politicians’ visits to Taiwan or organizing events that spotlight Taiwan, would help explain the entire subnational tethering process of from start to finish. Furthermore, West Virginia’s recent watering down of its normally consistent strong support for Taiwan in order to appease China during the signing of an economic MoU could signal increasing Chinese
influence at the subnational level. This should be monitored for the purposes of future research, as successful Chinese subnational tethering could impact Taiwan and its relationship with the United States.

Taiwan will continue to depend on the US for support and protection, especially as China flexes its muscles as a rising power. However, subnational tethering provides Taiwan with a strong, widespread, resilient base of US support that will be difficult to dislodge. This strategy is central to Taiwan’s goal of assuring US assistance and thereby maintaining its autonomy, as well as expanding its international role. It remains to be seen, however, if this subnational tethering will be able to withstand China’s might, especially if China changes its weak subnational engagement and begins to compete with Taiwan to influence America’s powerful state governments. After all, Gulliver may have been large, but the Lilliputians were still able to tether him together. Likewise, Taiwan has been able to tether the United States through its often overlooked, yet remarkably influential state governments.
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Appendix: Dataset of Taiwan Engagement with US States

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