

Taiwan's Participation in the World Health Organization and the Role of the United States, 1997-2009

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Abstract

In April 2009, Taiwan received an invitation from the World Health Organization (WHO) to attend the 62nd World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva as an observer under the name of "Chinese Taipei." The invitation was widely seen as a result of improving relations across the Taiwan Strait in the wake of President Ma Ying-jeou taking office in May 2008. This outcome, however, had much deeper roots and involved other countries, principally the United States, as well as interactions between China and previous governments in Taiwan. This study examines the background of Taiwan's inclusion as an observer in the annual WHA, reviews the "facilitator" role of the United States, discusses support from other countries, and finally considers PRC posturing with regards to the participation of Taiwan in the WHO.

Key Words: Taiwan, WHA, observer, United States, China