



Cover illustrations courtesy of ITRI, IBM and TSMC. On the right, the first set of four Chinese characters means 'Taiwan science and technology' and the second set of six characters can be translated as 'which way to go?'

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regional nature insight

Taiwan

By tapping a reservoir of ethnic Chinese scientific talent in the United States, the little island of Taiwan has achieved a global presence in the electronics industry that far exceeds its geographical size. Chinese scientists returned from the West have also created pockets of excellence in basic research in Taiwan that are beginning to make their mark on the world stage. But Taiwan's very success is placing stress on the island's nascent research infrastructure. The booming electronics industry is sucking some of the best researchers out of the still fragile public sector research system as the flow of returnee scientists from the United States diminishes with the expansion of the US economy. A substantial and growing pool of private and government investment funds is available to support development of new science-based industries in areas such as genomics, biochips and pharmaceuticals. But Taiwan still lacks the fundamental infrastructure to build industries in these fields. So Taiwan is once again turning to its network of Chinese scientists in the United States in search of experienced manpower and promising technologies to bring to the island and co-develop with US partners. Fledgling investment links with the Chinese mainland also hint of a possible dynamic interaction between Chinese scientists in Taiwan, the United States and mainland China that could help bring Taiwan onto the map in biotechnology if the winds of political fortune allow.

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Note from the Editor

Choosing appropriate words when writing about Taiwan is not easy. Is Taiwan a country or part of China? Are the people in Taiwan, Chinese or Taiwanese? Immigration officials stamp 'Republic of China' on the passports of entrants to Taiwan, and officials in Beijing insist unequivocally that Taiwan is part of China. But the recent election of Taiwan's new president Chen Shui-bian, who heads a party containing radicals advocating independence, has raised the political stakes in the highly sensitive issue of Taiwan's status. In this *Regional Insight*, we use the term 'Chinese' to refer to a broad ethnic group of people whether they come from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, California or mainland China. But where distinction is necessary, we use Taiwanese. The other headache is name order. As all scientists and government officials when dealing with western publications use a western order for their names with surname last, we have respected their wishes. But we have not tried to force a consistent standard by, for example, changing Mao Tse Tung to Tse-Tung Mao, because the traditional Chinese order of his name with surname first is that by which he is well known throughout the world. The same is true of Chen Shui-bian.

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