

Fortnightly Review

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United States and Taiwan Step Up Cybersecurity Cooperation Amid Uptick in China's Cyber Offensive

On September 17, the director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT)—the United States *de facto* embassy in the island—delivered a policy speech that underscored an important new frontier of security cooperation between the two countries. At the “Hacking for Good: AI & Cybersecurity” forum, Brent Christensen, the *de facto* US ambassador to Taiwan, [revealed](#) that the United States will for the first time co-host with Taiwan a cybersecurity exercise that will be held in Taiwan in early November.

The drill named the Cyber Offensive and Defensive Exercises is scheduled to last for five days. While the United States has reportedly [observed](#) similar exercises in the past, this is the first time that the United States will send a team to participate in the multilateral exercise that will reportedly bring together teams from [15 countries](#) to address simulated cyberthreats from North Korea, targeting social engineering, critical infrastructure protection, and financial crimes.

According to [Taiwan's vice premier](#), Chen Chi-mai (陳其邁), who also heads the Cyber Security Department within the Executive Yuan, “Taiwan is hoping that the debut cyber security drill will not only prepare the government for future attacks but also help Taiwan and other countries to form a joint cyber security network.” The exercise is [modeled after Cyber Storm](#)—the biennial cybersecurity exercise hosted by the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The [Cyber Storm](#) exercise was first held in 2006 and is the most extensive US government-sponsored cybersecurity exercise of its kind. The exercise regularly includes [12 international partners](#) and involves an international exercise with the International Watch and Warning Network (IWWN) that included Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United

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States. The IWWN was established in 2004 to promote international collaboration on addressing cyber threats, attacks, and vulnerabilities. It [provides a mechanism](#) for participating countries to share information to build global cyber situational awareness and incident response capabilities.

Mandated by Congress, Cyber Storm is designed to strengthen cyber preparedness in the public and private sectors. In its 2016 report to Congress, the US-China Security and Economic Review Commission—a Congressional body created in 2000 to investigate and make policy recommendations on national security and trade issues related to China—[recommended](#) that Taiwan be invited to participate in the Cyber Storm exercise. The latest Cyber Storm exercise was held in the Spring of 2018 and, [despite previous requests](#), Taiwan was not invited to participate in the exercise. The next Cyber Storm exercise is scheduled for 2020.

The announcement that the United States is participating in Taiwan's cyber exercise comes amid Beijing's [intensifying pressure campaign](#) to squeeze Taiwan's international space. Indeed, it has even been difficult for Taiwan to gain [membership](#) into international Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT) alliances. Despite Beijing's ongoing suppression of its ability to participate in international exercises, Taiwan is actively pursuing overseas relationships to bolster its cybersecurity. In an [article](#) authored by Dr. Crystal Pryor, the program director and research fellow at Pacific Forum, which explored opportunities for Taiwan to form partnerships in cyberspace:

“The Taiwan government invites observers every two years from the United States Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to offer recommendations for improving its cybersecurity exercises. Taiwan also has a Coordination Center (TWCERT/CC), established in 1998, for the purpose of coordinating with the European Union and other CERTs. Since 2017, the Coordination Center has participated in the “Stop.Think.Connect” program and automatic indicator sharing (AIS) established by US-CERT under US DHS. Taiwan also contributes information on HIDDEN COBRA (North Korean malicious cyber activity), sharing compromised IPs at least monthly, among other initiatives. “

The announcement that the United States is participating in Taiwan's cyber drills this year reflects the deepening of US-Taiwan security cooperation and dovetails

other efforts underway between the United States and Japan to strengthen cybersecurity cooperation. According to a Japanese expert speaking at a conference organized by the [Project 2049 Institute](#) that examined areas of cooperation between the United States, Japan, and Taiwan, one area of cooperation that came up is in the field of cyber defense. Indeed, Taiwan already shares information on cyber threats with [Japan](#) and has memorandums of understanding with the Japan Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Center (JP-CERT).

Underscoring the extent of the cyber threat to Taiwan's technology sector and the United States, the AIT director [stated](#):

“As we speak, pernicious actors, including China, are engaged in relentless attempts to steal Taiwan's and the United States' trade secrets, intellectual property, and most valuable data. Evidence indicates Chinese-backed cyber attacks on Taiwan's technology industry were seven times greater in 2018 than in 2017, and they are on track to be twenty times greater in 2019. “

The [Taiwan Relations Act \(TRA\)](#), a remarkable domestic law that legally governs relations with Taiwan in the absence of formal diplomatic ties between the United States and Taiwan, stipulates that “the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.” In light of the clear and growing threats from China, especially in the cyber domain, the US obligation to provide defensive articles and services should naturally extend to the cyber frontier.

According to a former US official who has worked on international cybersecurity cooperation, there are three areas that the United States and Taiwan could help each other in cyberspace. One area is through increasing information exchange, the second is to study developments of cyber-institutions and coordination within Taiwan, and third is to help Taiwan enhance international contact so that it may share its cyber experience to the world. More immediately, the former official noted that the United States and Taiwan should establish 1.5 and Track Two cyber dialogues. [1] In addition to co-hosting the cyber exercise, Director Christensen also noted that the United States hopes to help Taiwan develop its [International Cybersecurity Center of Excellence](#).

The main point: The announcement that the United States is participating in Taiwan's cyber exercise comes

amid Beijing's intensifying campaign to squeeze Taiwan's international space.

[1] Author's conversation with an unnamed former US government official, late August 2019.

CCP Promotes United Front in Taiwan through Higher Education Cooperation

In the widening front of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) influence operations in Taiwan and across the world, the CCP appears to be attempting to coopt higher education institutions in the island democracy. In early September, the Chinese Zhongshan Cultural Exchange Association (中華中山文化交流協會), Jilin Provincial Education Department (吉林省教育廳), Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang Jilin Provincial Committee (民革吉林省委), and Jilin Provincial Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) co-organized [the 3rd Cross-Straits University Presidents Forum](#) (第三屆海峽兩岸大學校長論壇), which was held at Changchun Institute of Architecture and Civil Engineering in Jilin province. [Zhang Bojun](#) (張伯軍, b. 1956), vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, [Li Jinghao](#) (李景浩, b. 1960), member of the Standing Committee of the CPC Jilin Provincial Committee and director of the provincial United Front Work Department, and [An Lijia](#) (安立佳, b. 1964), deputy governor of Jilin Province, attended the opening ceremony.

Educational institutions are an important pillar in the CCP's United Front work and this focus is reflected in the organization of the CCP United Front Work Department. The presence of the Revolutionary Committee and United Front Work Department in the forum are also indicators of the Forum's political purpose. This line of effort is also consistent with the Party's broader efforts to manipulate and co-opt culture, education systems, and media to influence democracies. The Hoover Institute-Asia Society study "Chinese Influence & American Interests" noted how the Chinese government is also attempting to influence cultural and academic institutions in the United States. As noted in the [report](#):

"China is not the only authoritarian government that has given or facilitated gifts to American academic institutions or think tanks, but it is the wealthiest ... the trend toward large gifts from Chinese sources, many with some kind of government linkage underscores the need for vigilance in enforcing a stricter code of due diligence

and transparency on the part of university administrations and faculties."

The Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang is one of eight CCP-approved democratic parties and "second line" authorities within the united front system. Non-CCP parties play a critical role in subordination of Taiwan to CCP authority. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) [is the highest-level entity overseeing the united front system](#) and exercises "democratic supervision" over non-CCP parties, mass organizations, and prominent personalities. The composition of the CPPCC is represented by CCP-aligned political parties (e.g., Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League, Revolutionary Committee of the Kuomintang), people's organizations, and sectors. The CPPCC's function is that of an [advisory role](#), that not only provides recommendations for government policy, but perhaps more importantly for its convening function, by which, policies set by the CCP are disseminated to all the social groups represented in the advisory body. The Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang has the second highest number of seats in the CPPCC (30 percent).

Around 60 universities from across the Taiwan Strait including principals and vice principals of higher education institutions from Taiwan attended the [Forum](#) on "Thinking and Resilience – The New Era of the University." In his speech, the vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, Zhang Bojun, stated that universities are the source of knowledge and the gathering place of talents. Speaking to senior representatives of universities from Taiwan, Zhang noted how university president's philosophy, ideology, and style have profound influence on the development of the university. He [added](#) that he hoped that the presidents of the universities gathered at the Forum will enhance cross-strait understanding and consensus through such activities, promote exchanges and cooperation; jointly promote traditional Chinese culture, peaceful development of cross-strait relations, and contribute to the "Chinese dream" of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

The CCP's efforts coopt Taiwan's educational institutions are not limited to higher education institution. Elementary schools are also not spared. These efforts are part of a [widening ideological campaign](#). The importance of educational institutions and education professionals in the ideological struggle were highlighted by the CCP general secretary, Xi Jinping (習近平, b. 1953), in an ideology-laden speech to a forum of

retired professors and teachers of ideology and political theory in primary and secondary schools in March 2019. For instance, on March 11, the 16th Cross-Strait Little Peace Angles Mutual Exchange (第16屆海峽兩岸和平小天使互訪交流) was held in Taipei at the Taipei City Minzu Elementary School (台北市民族國小). Since the establishment of the exchange back in 1992, nearly 2,000 children from Taiwan and the China have reportedly participated in this cross-Strait program. The event is organized by United Front organizations such as the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots (全國台聯) and the All-China Youth Pioneer National Work Committee (全國少工委), which is an organization under the Communist Youth League (CYL).

The main point: In the widening front of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) influence operations in Taiwan and across the world, the CCP appears to be attempting to coopt educational institutions in the island democracy as part of an intensifying ideological campaign.

Taiwan's Forward March on Religious Freedom

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

I-wei Jennifer Chang is a research fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

A Taiwanese official made headlines for her [attendance](#) at the Global Call to Protect Religious Freedom at the United Nations (UN) on September 23. Lily Hsu (徐麗文), director-general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in New York (駐紐約台北經濟文化辦事處), was invited to attend the religious freedom event hosted by President Donald J. Trump at UN headquarters in New York. At the meeting, Trump called on the international community [to protect communities of faith](#) and [end religious persecution](#). "As a free and open democracy, Taiwan is committed to furthering the cause of religious freedom in the Indo-Pacific," Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [tweeted](#) after the event.

Over the past few years, the United States and Taiwan have found common cause on the issue of religious freedom and have collaborated in ways that strengthen their bilateral relations. The US Department of State held the first [Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom](#) in July 2018 and called on states to create Ambassador at Large positions for religious freedom after the Trump administration appointed Sam Brownback as the US Ambassador at Large for International Religious

Freedom. Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) responded by appointing [Pusin Tali](#) (布興·大立), president of the Yu-Shan Theological College and Seminary, as Taiwan's first Ambassador at Large for religious freedom. The Taiwan government also pledged to donate a total of USD \$1 million, or [\\$200,000 per year for five years](#), to the US State Department's International Religious Freedom Fund (I-ReFF) to promote religious freedom around the world.

In March 2019, Taipei hosted the first ever regional religious forum, "A Civil Society Dialogue on Securing Religious Freedom in the Indo-Pacific Region," attended by [US Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback](#) and experts and officials from more than 10 countries. Later in July, Taiwanese official—Stanley Kao, head of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in the United States, and Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom Pusin Tali—attended the [second Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, DC](#).

At a time when the United States is renewing its focus on religious freedom, Taiwan has also been strengthening domestic and overseas efforts to promote cultural and religious ties with multiple communities of faith particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. A notable example is Taiwan government's initiatives to promote ties with the Muslim world, particularly as Taipei pursues its "New Southbound Policy" (新南向政策) with Southeast Asian and South Asian countries. The Chinese Muslim Association (中國回教協會) based in Taipei noted that the Taiwan government has made significant improvements in the rights of Muslims by increasing the number of halal-certified restaurants from [120 to 160 in 2018](#) and [building new prayer rooms](#) at train stations, tourist attractions, and libraries, according to the US Department of State's 2018 International Religious Freedom Report.

Indeed, the State Department's previous religious freedom reports found [no cases of significant societal actions](#) in Taiwan that adversely affected religious freedom. However, the issue of labor rights for domestic workers has been commonly noted in the [2018 annual report](#), released in June 2019, and previous annual reports. [The International Religious Freedom Report for 2015](#) stated, "Domestic service workers and caretakers are not covered under the labor standards law and are therefore not legally guaranteed a weekly rest day. Due to this exclusion, many domestic workers were not able to attend religious services." The concern is that workers from Indonesia, who are largely Muslim, and those from the Philippines, who are mostly Roman

Catholic, may not be able to attend Friday prayers at the mosque or Sunday church services, respectively.

The 2018 International Religious Freedom Report also notes the continued difficulty of Tibetan Buddhist monks in obtaining resident [visas](#) to perform religious work in Taiwan. The Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (達賴喇嘛西藏宗教基金會) in Taipei reported that Tibetan Buddhist monks were unable to obtain resident visas and had to go through the cumbersome process of [renewing their visas in Thailand](#) every two months. Taiwan's government responded that the Tibetan monks did not have passports and instead traveled using [Indian Identity Certificates](#) (ICs), and said Taiwan issued [temporary religious visas](#) to IC holders. The Tibet Religious Foundation, whose stated objective is to "[develop mutual understanding and co-operation between the Tibetan and Taiwanese people](#)," also reported that Tibetan Buddhists were being harassed by a Buddhist organization in Taiwan, the True Enlightenment Practitioners Association (佛教正覺同修會), which is allegedly funded by China and is spreading messages that "[Tibetan Buddhism is not real Buddhism](#)." The American Institute in Taipei (AIT) has consulted with the Chinese Muslim Association, Tibet Religious Foundation, and other faith-based organizations in Taiwan, and has raised [such issues](#) of concern with Taiwanese government officials and lawmakers.

At a time when Beijing has interned [one million Uyghur Muslims](#) and is "[Sinicizing](#)" Islam and tightening controls on [Christianity](#) in China, Taiwan's clear record on religious freedom draws a stark contrast and serves to strengthen Taiwan's soft power. Under Chinese President Xi Jinping, Chinese authorities have sought to erase foreign influence associated with Islam and Christianity, such as by [removing Arabic script](#) from mosques and Muslim restaurants and [replacing Arab-style minarets](#) with Chinese-style architecture. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) posted a [video](#) on its Facebook page in April 2019 referencing the brutality of the Chinese Communist regime's treatment of Uyghurs. The DPP's Facebook post reminded Taiwanese "[not to remain silent when we see human rights being violated](#)." Yet, Radio Free Asia reported in May 2019 that the Tsai Administration [denied visas](#) to the Dalai Lama and Uyghur activist Rebiya Kadeer, who were supposed to attend the Taiwan International Religious Freedom Forum in Hsinchu on May 30. Dolkun Isa, President of the World Uyghur Congress, was also denied a visa to travel to Taiwan to attend religious freedom forums during both the Ma Ying-jeou and Tsai administrations.

Historically, China's persecuted religious communities have found refuge in Taiwan. Since the end of the Chinese civil war in 1949, those that fled to Taiwan with the Kuomintang (KMT) included religious groups, such as Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Hui Muslims, who fought alongside the KMT against the Chinese Communists. Though Taiwan was not the main destination for many of these groups, with many of these refugees fleeing to India, Central Asia, and the Middle East, some of them did nonetheless settle in Taiwan and contributed to the island's religious diversity.

More recently, Falun Gong members, who face severe persecution and were banned in China in 1999, have found a safe haven in Taiwan. Banners declaring that "Falun Gong is Great" (法輪大法好) can be seen throughout Taiwan. The Falun Gong Society of Taiwan estimates there are [hundreds of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners](#) in Taiwan. Yet, there have been reports of Chinese interference efforts to reduce Falun Gong activities and discredit the group in Taiwan. Chinese government authorities reportedly [requested](#) Radio Taiwan International (RTI) to roll back the programming hours for Sound of Hope, a Falun Gong radio show in Taiwan. RTI, however, [renewed its contract](#) with Sound of Hope for another year.

While Taiwan's values on religious freedom have become another marker of its national identity that distinguishes itself from China, the emphasis on protecting religious beliefs and expression is more a by-product of the island's democratic consolidation and protection of civil liberties—alongside freedom of speech and an independent media—rather than an attempt to be different from China. Taiwan's path towards religious freedom has also been shaped by the role of civic faith-based organizations in the island's social fabric, charity, and politics. Former President Ma said Taiwan's religious groups are active in providing disaster relief, which caused many Taiwanese to "[recognize and have an awareness for the important role played by religion](#)." Local Buddhist organizations such as Tzu Chi Foundation (慈濟基金會) have often been first responders—sometimes arriving to the scene before local government authorities do—by [providing aid and assistance](#) to victims of natural disasters, ranging from floods to earthquakes.

Religious organizations are part of Taiwan's teeming civil society. At a time when Taiwan faces challenges in gaining recognition on the international stage, it is imperative for it to strengthen its internal legitimacy such as by guaranteeing people's freedoms, including on religion. As a corollary to the security aspects of the

US Indo-Pacific Strategy, Taiwan and the United States should also highlight common democratic and political values such as religious freedom as part of a broader strategy to bolster the democratic alliance in the region. Taiwan and the United States can strengthen bilateral cooperation in promoting religious freedom through Taiwan's support of U.S.-led initiatives to protect persecuted religious minorities, while Washington should continue to invite Taipei to participate in bilateral and multilateral forums on religious freedom and tolerance.

The main point: Taiwan has championed the cause of religious freedom and tolerance, which not only provides another avenue for US-Taiwan cooperation, but also helps to elevate its soft power with other communities of faith especially in the Indo-Pacific region.

A Countervailing Strategy for China's Diplomatic Pressure on Taiwan

By: J. Michael Cole

J. Michael Cole is a senior non-resident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

China's successful [luring of two of Taiwan's official diplomatic allies](#) last month, and the high possibility of more to come between now and the January 2020 elections in Taiwan, suggests that Beijing is once again weaponizing diplomatic relations and the island-nation's undefined legal status as a means to interfere in Taiwan's democratic processes.

During the Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) years (2008-2016), Beijing and Taipei had agreed to a "diplomatic truce," a period which indeed saw Beijing refrain from attempting to poach official diplomatic allies of the Republic of China (Taiwan) as it made gains in other areas. Following the election of Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the 2016 elections and an ensuing freeze in cross-Strait relations, Beijing resumed its aggressive efforts to downsize Taiwan's recognition on the international stage, first by using its influence at the United Nations to prevent Taiwan from participating at specialized UN agencies and then by using promises of economic largesse to Taiwan's allies.

Since May 2016 until last month, Taiwan has lost a total of seven official diplomatic allies, including two within the space of a week in September 2019—the Solomon Islands and Kiribati, both in the South Pacific, a zone of growing strategic competition between the

United States, Australia, and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Stealing allies is part of Beijing's multifaceted coercive approach to Taiwan, a means by which to (1) undermine morale within the Taiwanese public and among Taiwanese diplomats, (2) pressure the Tsai administration into recognizing the so-called "1992 Consensus" and "One-China" and (3) helping political parties, politicians, and municipalities in Taiwan that have shown a willingness to abide by Beijing's demands.

Following the DPP's debacle in the November 24, 2018 local elections across Taiwan and the rise of the Kuomintang's (KMT) Han Kuo-yu as mayor of Kaohsiung and subsequently as the KMT's presidential pick for the 2020 elections, there was much speculation as to whether Beijing would draw down its aggressive behavior toward Taiwan with the hopes of limiting its footprint ahead of the general elections, or whether it would sustain its coercive efforts to further undermine morale in Taiwan and support for the embattled Tsai administration.

Following November's upset, the Han "wave" seemed unstoppable. For a while, polls indicated that Han would prevail against Tsai, and the DPP seemed at a loss as to how to regain momentum—so much so that Tsai's former premier, William Lai (賴清德), took the unprecedented (and, according to some, divisive) step of challenging her for the primary. Tsai eventually prevailed against her challenger and despite being hit by a [cigarette smuggling scandal](#), her support numbers began to rise, in part thanks to the crisis that was developing in Hong Kong over the controversial extradition bill.

Around that time, divisions within the KMT that had never completely disappeared—even following its unexpectedly good showing in the November elections—began to resurface. A marginal populist within his own party, with appeal mainly among an older and more conservative segment of society, Han was regarded as unpredictable and out of control. Online and off, Han's supporters would brook no opposition to his seemingly predestined ascendance to the presidency and started to threaten his critics, including many members of the mainstream KMT and its elite. The split within the blue camp was exacerbated by billionaire tycoon Terry Gou (郭台銘), who only begrudgingly accepted Han's nomination on the KMT ticket and then signaled that he could run as an independent with support from Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) and the new party he had created in August, the Taiwan People's Party (TPP,

台灣民眾黨). Gou then pulled out of the race and subsequently [relinquished his party membership](#), fueling further speculation of disunity within the blue camp.

By September, President Tsai was polling well ahead of any challenger or combination thereof, and the situation in Hong Kong was continuing to deteriorate into spasms of violence. It became increasingly difficult to fault President Tsai's China policy and her refusal to regard the "one country, two systems" (一國兩制) framework—Beijing's one and only offer to Taiwan, reaffirmed by Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary-General Xi Jinping (習近平) during his [January 2 address to Taiwanese compatriots](#)—as a viable option.

With Han, ostensibly a Beijing favorite, engaged on an apparent self-destructive trajectory and mainstream elements within the KMT distancing themselves from him, rumors began circulating that the party could, just as it had ahead of the 2016 elections, replace its original candidate at the eleventh-hour. Beijing has now conceivably concluded that trends in Taiwan are no longer in its favor and that it needs to intervene to slow the momentum, if not prevent a Tsai re-election. After lying low while Han soared, it once again has become necessary for Beijing to put pressure on the Tsai administration. Beijing thus scooped up two allies, promising more to come and threatening that all of them could go if Tsai were re-elected in January. The latter statement dispelled any notion that Beijing would not interfere with Taiwan's elections.

If we are to fully comprehend the rationale behind the CCP's thinking on diplomatic allies, it is crucial that we also take into account considerations other than Taiwan. In other words, while "punishing" Taiwan or hoping to give assistance to Taiwanese politicians whom it regards as potential willing partners is undoubtedly part of Beijing's calculations, geopolitics are also involved. Its decision to poach Taiwan's allies in strategic parts of the world, such as the South Pacific or Central and Latin America (e.g., Panama), is aimed not only at Taiwan but is also very much part of its efforts to (1) push the United States out of what it regards as its near-abroad and (2) shape the environment in favor of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, 一帶一路, also known as One Belt, One Road). Put simply, not everything that Beijing does is about Taiwan; in some cases, it might be more about hitting two birds with one stone while in others, Taiwan might only be a secondary consideration in a much bigger game of geopolitics.

Whatever the motivation, the consequences for Taiwan are a loss of formal ties with a UN member, the

dismantling of its diplomatic presence and influence in the countries involved, and ammunition for opposition parties which are blaming the Tsai administration's "intransigent" China policy for Taiwan's diplomatic setbacks.

Countervailing Measures

While the direct repercussions of losing official allies are arguably minimal and entirely survivable for Taiwan, the symbolic effects may nevertheless require countervailing measures to ensure that Taiwan's sovereignty and ability to prosper are not unduly affected. The key to this is for Taiwan's principal unofficial diplomatic partners, chief among them the United States, to step in whenever China does anything to constrain Taiwan's international space. The idea isn't so much to threaten or boycott sovereign states that, for reasons legitimate or not, decided (sometimes despite opposition from the public, as was the case in the Solomon Islands) to abandon Taiwan and embrace China, nor should the main elements of the countervailing strategy involve retribution aimed at Beijing. Instead, Taiwan and its democratic partners should adopt an asymmetrical, squeeze-the-balloon strategy whereby any time Beijing takes a course of action that threatens Taiwan's sovereignty, commensurate action elsewhere will be taken to strengthen Taiwan's presence and connectivity internationally. This could include high-level visits by officials, efforts to ensure Taiwan's participation at multilateral agencies despite Beijing's opposition, or the consolidation into something more permanent of ad hoc alternative mechanisms that have been triggered in response to Beijing's preventing Taiwan from joining global organizations.

Arguably, since 2016 the United States and other countries have already augmented their relationship with Taiwan, which has helped Taipei to weather the diplomatic storm and the Tsai administration to retain its legitimacy. However, countervailing efforts should be more systematic and Beijing should be made aware that such responses will be automatic. This kind of messaging will be particularly important should Tsai be re-elected next year and if Beijing decide to act on its threat to punish Taiwan by stealing every one of its remaining official diplomatic allies.

It is important to add that none of these would require formal recognition of Taiwan, departure from the Taiwan Relations Act or the violation of a country's "One-China" policy.

Such countervailing efforts would mitigate the psychological and material effects of such punitive action by

China toward Taiwan. It would also lower the incentives for Beijing to act in such a way as it realizes that this strategy will inevitably trigger corrective measures on the part of Taiwan's democratic partners. This way, despite efforts by Beijing to restrict Taiwan's international space, a certain balance could be maintained, which would reassure Taiwanese authorities, as well as the public, that they can continue to abide by their principles and will not be punished for doing so.

The main point: Beijing has ramped up its efforts to constrain Taiwan's presence internationally and can be expected to further increase the pressure if President Tsai is re-elected in January. To mitigate the effects of Beijing's punitive strategy and ensure a balance of power, democratic allies of Taiwan like the United States must adopt a countervailing strategy.

The Demonstration Effects between Hong Kong Protests and Taiwan's 2020 Elections

By: Michael Mazza

Michael Mazza is a senior non-resident fellow at GTI. He is also a visiting fellow in foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he analyzes US defense policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is tragic, though perhaps appropriate, that the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been marked by the spilling of the blood. On October 1st, when the PRC was showing off its most advanced military hardware in Beijing, a Hong Kong police officer shot a demonstrator in the chest with a live round of ammunition. With the anniversary's passing and with blood on the street, the contest between Hong Kong's people on the one hand and Hong Kong and Beijing authorities on the other may be entering a new phase.

It has now been well over four months and the demonstrations in Hong Kong have shown no signs of petering out. The 70th anniversary celebration might have served as an inflection point, but the police shooting and Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam's invocation of emergency powers seem more likely to galvanize protesters than to deter them from taking to the streets. Nor is there much reason to believe that the authorities are willing to compromise in a meaningful way. Xi Jinping has exercised relative restraint thus far,

but Hong Kong may not be out of the woods just yet.

There are no upcoming national holidays in China that Beijing is likely to see as a "deadline" for solving the unrest in Hong Kong, but it may not be China's political calendar that dictates its approach to the semi-autonomous territory. Instead, Xi Jinping may be thinking about Taiwan's political calendar as he considers how and when to resolve ongoing strife in Hong Kong.

Elections on the Horizon

Taiwan's next presidential election is scheduled for January 11, 2020, and Xi Jinping is undoubtedly eager for Tsai Ing-wen to lose her reelection bid. Beijing has made its displeasure with President Tsai clear, both by word and by deed. The Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) of the State Council set the tone early on in a statement after the president's inauguration speech, when its spokesman rejected the clear olive branches offered in her remarks, instead describing the speech as an "incomplete test answer." In those same comments, the TAO spokesman asserted that in order to pass Beijing's test, Tsai would have to confirm "adherence to the common political foundation of the 1992 consensus that embodies the one-China principle"—a political impossibility for the then-incoming president.

In the years since, Beijing has shut down a semi-official cross-strait communication mechanism, restricted Chinese tourism to the island, prevented Taiwan's inclusion in various international forums, stepped up military activities meant to threaten the island, and poached a number of Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies. Indeed, after the Solomon Islands last month severed ties with the Republic of China, Chinese state media [threatened](#) that if Tsai is reelected in January, Taiwan will lose all of its remaining formal diplomatic relationships.

When Tsai Ing-wen's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was trounced in last November's "nine-in-one" local elections, it appeared she would have an uphill battle for reelection in 2020. Late in 2018, her approval rating was under 30 percent, while that of Han Kuo-yu, the surprise winner of the Kaohsiung mayoral election and eventual Kuomintang presidential nominee, was over 60 percent. Although these elections likely hinged primarily on domestic issues, the TAO was quick to claim that the KMT's success was due to a desire among Taiwan voters for the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

But now, nearly a year after Taiwan's last election, the tables have turned. During the first five months

of 2019, Tsai Ing-wen was consistently behind in polls matching her against Han Kuo-yu: Han's biggest lead in the [My-Formosa poll](#), in February, was about 25 percentage points. In August, Tsai had a lead of nearly 19 points in the same poll. Nathan Batto's [aggregate polling](#) shows Han with a 15 point lead at the beginning of May; at the beginning of October, it is Tsai with a 15 point advantage.

Xi Jinping's January speech marking the 40th anniversary of the "Message to Compatriots in Taiwan," in which he adopted a my-way-or-the-highway tone and tacitly linked the "1992 consensus" with a "one country, two systems" approach to unification, gave Tsai Ing-wen an early boost, as it justified the DPP's wary approach to China and provided her an opportunity to portray herself as standing between the island's de facto independence and submission to Beijing.

But it has been the events in Hong Kong that have helped give Tsai Ing-wen a leg up on Han Kuo-yu and dealt a significant blow to his hopes of winning the presidency. Beijing's and Han's essentially open mutual embrace—Han visited the Chinese government liaison offices in Hong Kong and Macau and met with the head of the Taiwan Affairs Office in Shenzhen during a March visit to China—has tied him in voters' minds to goings-on in the semi-autonomous city. Han's efforts to distance himself from the actions of authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing—after protests started, he [declared](#) that "one country, two systems" would be implemented in Taiwan "over my dead body"—may have been too little, too late. Meanwhile, Tsai can point to Hong Kong and promise she will forestall such an outcome for Taiwan. Importantly, whereas Tsai's consistent preference for keeping Beijing at arm's length may have been an electoral vulnerability early in the year, it now appears to be a strength.

It was not foreordained that events in Hong Kong and Taiwan would be so linked, as there are important differences between the two. Taiwan has been effectively independent since 1949 and has been a full democracy since 1996. Hong Kong has never been independent and although it has democratic institutions, its government is not truly representative. Some independence-minded Taiwanese, moreover, have at times in the past intentionally ignored human rights and democracy issues in the PRC as a way of emphasizing Taiwan's separateness.

But Hong Kongers and Taiwanese find their similarities difficult to ignore. The Chinese Communist Party poses similar threats to each island's way of life and has for

decades. Hong Kong and Taiwan, in effect, face a common enemy and have increasingly looked to the other to better understand the nature of that enemy and how to counter it. In 2014, for example, some Hong Kongers surely looked to Taiwan's Sunshine Movement and drew inspiration from its success. Months later, the ultimate failure of the Occupy protests in Hong Kong helped clarify for Taiwan what political union with the PRC would mean. What's more, this mutual observation at a distance has been matched with growing people-to-people links among leaders and activists. The politics of Taiwan and Hong Kong are now entangled and likely to remain so for the time being.

Taiwan's Elections and the Threat to Hong Kong

Of course, it is still a long road to the January elections. Bad economic news, unforeseen events, or a change in candidate for the KMT (as happened in the previous presidential election) could lead to a change in Tsai's fortunes. It is also unclear what tricks Beijing may have up its sleeve. Assuming it has not yet given up on a KMT victory, it might try to tip the scales by ramping up a misinformation campaign, putting the squeeze on Taiwan's economy, or using its military to threaten the island—although all have the potential to be counterproductive from China's point of view.

But if Tsai continues to put distance between herself and her opponent, Xi Jinping may come to assess that her victory is likely. That is when things may get dangerous for Hong Kong.

A Tsai victory would represent a clear and unambiguous defeat for Xi, who has made unification with Taiwan a key deliverable of his "China dream." It would show, once again, that China's leaders have little idea how to best manage relations with a democratic Taiwan and entirely ineffective in bringing the island back into the fold. Indeed, Beijing elites might well conclude that Xi Jinping's approach has only made unification even more unlikely.

The unrest in Hong Kong, of course, is already making a mockery of Xi Jinping's promise of a "harmonious" society in China. The movement in Hong Kong is not only advocating for a liberal vision in Hong Kong, but advocating against mainland China's own system of governance and societal norms. In short, the demonstrators are openly defiant of Xi Jinping and of China's authority over the city.

As Taiwan's January elections approach, and if Tsai Ing-wen continues to perform well, will Xi Jinping be willing to sustain the dual embarrassments of a Tsai victo-

ry and Hong Kongers' persistent intransigence? He can only significantly and confidently affect developments in one of these two places. And while compromise would be the easiest way to diffuse tensions in Hong Kong, it is not at all clear that Xi believes that would be a political winner for him in Beijing. If not, we could see the resort to force in Hong Kong that has been feared in recent months.

It is possible that Xi Jinping expects the consequences of using force would also be severe in Taiwan. He might believe that a violent crackdown in Hong Kong would deal a deathblow to his goal of uncoerced unification—though he surely recognizes that that goal is already on life-support as it is. In order to deter Xi's worst impulses with respect to both Hong Kong and Taiwan, the Trump administration should make clear that it, too, sees developments in both places as intimately linked. Washington should convey to Beijing that if force is used in Hong Kong, President Trump will not only publicly restate former President Bill Clinton's formulation that cross-Strait differences must be resolved "with the assent of the people of Taiwan," but that he will go one step further: he will state American opposition, barring significant political reform in Beijing, to a "one country, two systems" arrangement for China and Taiwan.

Whether he lets the unrest continue, green-lights compromise, or resorts to force (which is sure to bring international opprobrium and, perhaps, economic consequences) in Hong Kong, Xi will be open to domestic criticism. How Xi appraises the risks of each course of action is an open question. The United States, at least, should make clear that the consequences for squelching the protests would be very high indeed.

The main point: If Xi Jinping assesses Tsai Ing-wen is likely to win reelection in January, his patience for upheaval in Hong Kong may wear thin.

Reagan's Memo and its Prequel on Arms Sales to Taiwan

By: Shirley Kan

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On August 30, 2019, as one of his final actions as the National Security Advisor, John Bolton declassified

President Reagan's secret memo dated August 17, 1982, to direct United States (US) policy in how to interpret the Communiqué issued with the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the same day. That third US-PRC Communiqué concerned US arms sales to Taiwan. What was the context for Reagan's memo as well as a vague note that he wrote earlier in 1982 to "keep our promises to Taiwan"—what I call the prequel? What are implications of these Presidential directives for US policy, Congressional oversight, and Taiwan?

Directing Policy on Arms Sales

In September 2019, the National Security Council (NSC) decided to release the declassified [memo](#) in full with Reagan's signature and through the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). On August 17, 1982, Reagan signed the four-paragraph memo as a directive to Secretaries of State and Defense George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger. Reagan emphasized that any reduction in arms sales to Taiwan would be premised on peace in the Taiwan Strait and China's declared "fundamental policy" of a peaceful resolution to the question of Taiwan. The President added that "the US willingness to reduce its arms sales to Taiwan is conditioned absolutely upon the continued commitment of China to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan-PRC differences. It should be clearly understood that the linkage between these two matters is a permanent imperative of US foreign policy." Finally, Reagan emphasized that "it is essential that the quantity and quality of the arms provided Taiwan be conditioned entirely on the threat posed by the PRC. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms, Taiwan's defense capability relative to that of the PRC will be maintained."

Actually, Reagan's memo has been known for many years in the NSC and other parts of the US Government and outside, as I and others have discussed or provided the text. I included it in my [CRS Report](#) for Congress, which cited among other sources the authoritative Ambassador James Lilley. [1]

Nonetheless, through successive administrations, skeptics had questioned why the NSC could not produce the memo from its archives. The NSC's release of this memo is overdue and puts the guidance in the unclassified, official record for Congress in its oversight and other actions. Moreover, this official, open directive for a "permanent imperative of US foreign policy" reinforces what I wrote about institutional compliance with the [Taiwan Relations Act](#) (TRA). Despite Congress' passage of the TRA in 1979, Reagan still considered it necessary to write the memo for the White House's

record to continue arms sales to Taiwan in response to China's potential threat. The memo enables consistency in policy rather than Presidential whims affecting arms sales. Finally, the memo enhances strategic communication that counters China's constant false narratives about the United States, Taiwan, and other countries.

Countering China's Blame on the US and Taiwan

China's political warfare blames the United States and Taiwan, prompting corrections. Just before the memo's declassification, China charged that the US sale of F-16V fighters violates the 1982 Communiqué. That document cited an intention of the United States to "reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution." However, US arms sales have not violated any agreement. Moreover, the US statement was premised on China's foregoing statement in that Communiqué, reiterating a "fundamental policy to strive for a peaceful solution to the Taiwan question." Indeed, the PRC's increasing military threat betrays its promise in that Communiqué.

On September 18, 2019, the Republic of China (ROC) (Taiwan)'s [Foreign Minister](#) Joseph Wu used Twitter to publicize the newly declassified memo. Wu commented that "it is China's own responsibility to STOP the military threat against Taiwan."

Taiwan's official [Central News Agency](#) (CNA) asserted that Reagan's memo has justified US arms sales despite the US-PRC Communiqué of August 1982. At the end of its news story, CNA cryptically cited a hand-written note dated March 1, 1982, from Reagan.

Intriguingly but vaguely mysterious, Reagan wrote a single, straight-forward sentence: "We keep our promises to Taiwan—period." I submit that Reagan's earlier note was the prequel to his memo of August 17, 1982. Reagan wrote directives for US officials to assure Taipei.

Nonetheless, decades later, China's increasing threat to Taiwan raises an issue about how it can maintain a favorable military balance. A salient question is how Taiwan assures the United States about shifting to asymmetric warfare for new ways of self-defense.

Understanding the Context for Reagan's Memo and its Prequel

What was the context for Reagan to feel compelled to sign his memo as the directive to interpret the Communiqué? Reagan started by stating that he agreed to the issuance of the Communiqué "in which we express

United States policy toward the matter of continuing arms sales to Taiwan." Reagan likely discerned that internal policy debates were raging and would continue to rage about whether to sustain arms sales.

Indeed, Reagan proved to be prescient about limitations in arms sales. In a CRS Report for Congress about the annual arms sales process for Taiwan, I wrote about a period from the early 1980s to 2001, in which the Executive Branch used arms sales talks only once a year and contrived "buckets" of values of annual arms sales calculated to show reductions from year to year. In 1999, some Members of Congress introduced the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (not passed), criticizing that "pressures to delay, deny, and reduce arms sales to Taiwan have been prevalent since the signing of the August 17, 1982 Communiqué." Starting in 2008, Congress raised concerns about Presidential "freezes" of arms sales in so-called "packages" to delay notifications to Congress.

According to Lilley, in the fall of 1981, Beijing started to pressure Washington for a new communiqué and a termination date for arms sales to Taipei. On one side were officials like Lilley, who knew Reagan's strategic thinking and became the US representative in Taipei as the Director of AIT in January 1982. Lilley advocated for a balanced policy of strong relationships with both Beijing and Taipei to serve US interests in Asian stability and democratization. He countered against other officials whom he called "crusaders for the strategic relationship with China" at the Central Intelligence Agency and the Departments of Defense and State. By the spring of 1982, the State Department started to concede on arms sales despite the TRA. [2]

In this context, Lilley also played a part in the prequel of March 1, 1982. On the day before, a newspaper in Taiwan reported that Secretary of State Alexander Haig suggested that if China followed a peaceful policy toward Taiwan, then the United States could hold arms sales to levels below that of President Carter's final year in office. On March 1, Taiwan's government at the highest level sought clarification from AIT Director Lilley. He then asked Washington for assurances to answer Taipei's leadership. The State Department's message to Lilley (which included assurances about meeting Taiwan's legitimate defense needs and sticking to the TRA) reached the Situation Room at the White House. As a result, Reagan wrote to National Security Advisor William Clark, "We keep our promises to Taiwan—period," and signed "RR." [3] When ROC (Taiwan) President Tsai Ing-wen stopped in Honolulu in March 2019, she viewed a photo exhibition at the

East-West Center about the TRA that included a display about Reagan's [hand-written note \(see display\)](#).

On July 14, 1982, a month before the third Communiqué, Lilley indirectly passed President Reagan's [Six Assurances](#) (including no date to end arms sales) to President Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) in Taipei.

Why did Reagan sign his memo of August 17, 1982, along with issuing the Communiqué? Lilley recounted NSC aide Gaston Sigur's explanation for Reagan's reasoning: "The President felt that the communiqué hit him at the last minute. He didn't like it, and his understanding of the communiqué was that if China were to become belligerent or build up power projection capability that brought insecurity or instability to the area, then the US would increase arms sales to Taiwan, regardless of what the communiqué said about quantity and quality conditions on arms sales."

Continuing the Presidential Insistence on a Peaceful Resolution

President Reagan was consistent with President Nixon in countering China, continuing the US insistence on a peaceful resolution, and clarifying that the communiqués were not joint agreements. It can be somewhat misleading to cite the three US-PRC documents as "joint communiqués." Indeed, in 1972, the United States did not even recognize the PRC but recognized the ROC in Taipei.

As the President who issued the first US-PRC Communiqué on February 27, 1972, Nixon wrote right after the second Communiqué (on normalization) in 1979 to Chairman Lester Wolff of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs. Nixon pointed out that, "Dr. Kissinger and I had extensive discussions with Chairman Mao and Premier Chou En-lai on the Taiwan issue in 1972. We could not reach an agreement and consequently stated our positions separately in the Shanghai Communiqué. In that document, the US 'reaffirmed' its support of a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. I consider that to be an unequivocal moral commitment."

Significantly, with salience for persistent policy debates, Nixon understood the strategic implication for US security interests beyond Taiwan. Nixon's letter to Wolff also stressed that: "normalization of US relations with the PRC is indispensable in furthering our goal of building a structure of peace in Asia and the world. But at a time when US credibility as a dependable ally and friend is being questioned in a number of countries, it is also vitally important that the Taiwan issue be handled

in a way which will reassure other nations—whether old friends, new friends, potential friends, or wavering friends—that it is safe to rely on America's word and to be America's friend." As Wolff emphasizes Nixon's point for current policy, "if the US abandons Taiwan, no ally will believe us." [4]

The main point: Reagan's memo and the prequel in his note continue to direct US policy and assure Taiwan. In turn, Taiwan remains obligated to give assurances about transforming its military for new asymmetric warfare to deter and defend against China's growing threat.

[1] James Lilley, *China Hands* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); and author's consultation with Lilley.

[2] James Lilley, *China Hands* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

[3] Author's consultations, August-September 2019.

[4] Author's consultations with Lester Wolff, including his letter from Nixon of February 14, 1979, and an in-person interview in September 2019.