

Fortnightly Review

Russell Hsiao

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Political Warfare Alert: Is China Using Religious Organizations as Proxies to Funnel Political Donations and Influence in Taiwan?

In an [interview](#) with the magazine *Mirror Weekly* (鏡週刊), the head of the Chinese Unification Promotion Party (CUPP) (also known as the Unionist Party)—a fringe pro-China political party in Taiwan—Chang An-Lo (張安樂 b. 1948) claimed that there are around 30 heads of temples on the island whom are either members of the CUPP or its supporters. The former triad leader mentioned several of these temples by name. They include Tainan City Wenheng Temple (文衡殿), Taichung City Shengwu Temple (聖武宮), Chiayi County Fengtian Temple (奉天宮), and Yunlin County Chaotian Temple (朝天宮). Chang stated how he would often be invited by representatives of these temples to participate in their ceremonies or to help with managing cross-Strait exchange matters. For instance, Yunlin County's Beigang Chaotian Temple chairman and Guangfu village chief, Wu Tung-ho (吳東合, b. 1957), is reportedly a CUPP member, among others.

Other temples such as the New Taipei City Youxuan Temple (祐玄宮), New Taipei City Guanghe Fude Temple (廣和福德宮), Yunlin Country Beishui Bishui Temple (北壇碧水寺), Tainan City Four Seas Yunhai Temples (四鯤鯨雲海宮), and Yunlin County Taiyu Temple (太子宮) also reportedly had CUPP party members in senior management positions. It should be noted that when asked by local reporters representatives of several of these temple associations assert that the views held by some of its board members are their [private views](#).

In a detailed expose of the CUPP's network, a *Commonwealth Magazine* [report](#) from 2018 found that CUPP “has more than 100 locations around Taiwan and over 30,000 members, had two people elected to village and town councils and two others elected as ward chiefs in local elections in 2014. In 2016's national elections, it received over 56,000 votes (about 0.5 percent of the votes cast) in the legislative party vote to de-

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termine at-large legislative seats.” The [article](#) also observed:

the three main pillars of the Unionist Party are *gangs, temples and overseas Taiwanese businesses*. No party dues are required and only 50 party members are needed to set up a local party chapter ... *They are mainly linked together through temple groups around Taiwan*. The White Wolf serves as the spiritual leader, and because of his strong network of “red” (Chinese) connections, he is able to bond closely with influential local factions. [emphasis added]

Ongoing law enforcement investigations into whether Chang received financial contributions that were not reported in accordance with the law and suspicion over embezzlement and tax evasion had [reportedly](#) uncovered the CUPP’s activities with these temple associations, which appear intended to exploit the lax government regulations over religious activities. Indeed, China and its proxies in Taiwan may be using religious organizations as a conduit through which Chinese money are being funneled into Taiwan and used for political purposes.

In a sense, the revelation by White Wolf of the relationships between pro-unification groups and temples with China are not new. Yet, recent public confirmation by Chang and a senior intelligence official are noteworthy. At The Jamestown Foundation’s 9th annual China Defense and Security Conference in Washington, DC co-sponsored by the Global Taiwan Institute, the deputy director-general of Taiwan’s National Security Bureau—the island’s premier intelligence agency—Lieutenant General Vincent Chen gave the featured [remarks](#) on the challenges of CCP influence operations in Taiwan and stated: “There are at least 22 pro-China organizations, political parties, and we have identified a number of them with connection to organized crime for extending their networking to local temples, businessmen, youths.”

As I have also documented in a [testimony](#) before the US-China Security and Economic Review Commission on CCP United Front against Taiwan in April 2018: “The groups targeted by CCP United Front [in Taiwan] is now broadly focused on 10 constituencies that include grass-roots villages, youth, students, Chinese spouses, aboriginals, pro-China political parties and groups, religious organizations, distant relatives, fishermen’s associations, and retired generals.” And as the Commonwealth [article](#) further noted:

The murky world of temple organizations, as opposed to democratic institutions, serves as the key platform

through which the Unionist Party connects all of Taiwan. Because of their huge cash flows and unsupervised finances, temples have always been a pillar of Taiwan’s underground economy. One insider says some Unionist Party members have secured important positions in temple groups, but by and large the party and temples have a cooperative relationship.

In related [news](#), a former candidate who ran for Taipei City Council and member of the Chinese Patriotic Alliance Association (CPAA, 中華愛國同心會) (also known as the Concentric Patriotism Alliance), Zhang Xiuye (張秀葉), was indicted by prosecutors for having received and illegally using funds from China for political purposes. [1] Zhang ran in last November’s local elections on the China Democratic Progressive Party’s (CDPP, 中國民主進步黨) ticket for Wanhua district in Taipei city. She concurrently serves as the secretary-general of both the CPAA and the CDPP. The Chinese Patriotic Alliance currently has about 200 members. The chairperson and chairman of the two organizations is Zhou Qingjun (周慶峻, b. 1943).

Taiwanese prosecutors [charged](#) Zhou for failing to obtain from the proper supervisory authority for permission to raise funds from supporters on the “Sponsored Us” page of the Chinese Patriotic Alliance Association’s website. According to prosecutors, Zhang received financial contributions in the amount of NT\$ 179,000 (US\$ 5,883.85) and RMB 2,000 (US\$ 285.30). The prosecution also found out that Zhou and Zhang received political donations from Zhou’s Hubei Tongxin Lianfa Agricultural Comprehensive Development Company (湖北同心聯發農業綜合開發公司) in 2018 located in Hubei province (China) for the amount of NT\$ 1.89 million (US\$ 62,442.71). Zhang had [allegedly](#) registered the funds for the Chinese Patriotic Alliance’s operation but used it for a campaign dinner celebrating the National Day of the People’s Republic of China and for her campaign for the Taipei City Council.

While the aforementioned incident represents a straightforward case of direct funding, which is easier for authorities to monitor and prosecute, the flood of Chinese money in Taiwan’s political space is much harder to stem given its scale and the multiple channels that it can go through. There are many indirect channels of funding, in-kind contributions, and signaling that are much harder to identify, prove intent, and stop. This presents a serious challenge for law enforcement authorities trying to prevent such activities, particularly if it pertains to the activities of these temple associations and other religious organizations. In his *Mirror Weekly* [interview](#), Chang made it a point that

he is not an agent of the CCP because China never authorized him, instead he referred to himself a “fellow traveler of the CCP” (中共同路人) and proclaimed that “China is my god” and “to die [for her] would be fine.”

The main point: White Wolf confirms that there are around 30 heads of temples within Taiwan who are either members of the CUPP or its supporters. Temples are considered a pillar of Taiwan’s underground economy. Because of lax regulations over temple activities and their unsupervised finances, they may serve as a conduit for Chinese money into Taiwan’s politics.

[1] For a detailed profile of the Chinese Patriotic Alliance Association, see, e.g., <https://www.taiwangazette.org/news/2018/10/25/they-used-to-be-anti-communist-but-now-they-play-to-beijings-tune>.

Taiwan Academic Missing in China as Broader Clamp Down of Foreign Nationals by Chinese Authorities on National Security Grounds

A third person from Taiwan has been [reported missing](#) within the past three months in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) for ostensibly “national security” reasons. Professor Shi Zhengping (施正屏) of Taiwan had reportedly disappeared in China in August of last year. The recent string of missing persons reports follows recent troubling [revelation](#) by the Taiwan government that 149 of its citizens had gone missing in China over the past three years (since May 2016). Of those 149 persons, 67 cases remain unsolved with no information as to the missing people’s whereabouts as signs point to China ramping up arbitrary enforcements of its new national security law. Late last year, Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig were [accused](#) by China of spying—and more recently, a Japanese professor from Hokkaido University has been [detained](#) for allegedly violating the country’s national security law.

The retired professor from National Taiwan Normal University (台灣師範大學) had [reportedly](#) “disappeared” after travelling to China in August last year and have been missing now for 14 months. Authorities in Taiwan believe that Shi has been detained in China on grounds of national security although there has been no official confirmation. After retiring in February 2018, Shi went to National Chengchi University to teach and set up a “global debate course” for international research English master students. Before September last year, the school wanted to ask Professor Shi to continue the class but was unable to reach him. The school said that it found out that Shi was missing

after reading the news.

According to Taiwan media [reports](#), Shi Zhengping is 56 years old and the chief economist of the Chinese state-owned “Huaxia Group” (華夏集團) and often travels to China. He is also affiliated with the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang). When former president Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party was in power, he served as the representative for agricultural trade in the United States. Later, he worked as a commentator in the pro-China Want Want China Times Media Group and was critical of the Tsai government. Shi’s apparent detention in China is more interesting because he is considered part of the pro-China faction in Taiwanese politics.

Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council Deputy Minister Chiu Chui-cheng (邱垂正) [stated](#) that Beijing authorities have not communicated on the matter with the Taiwan government. If Beijing has indeed restricted Shi’s personal freedom, Beijing should inform Taipei immediately. Also, based on humanitarian considerations, Beijing should allow family members to visit and protect their rights in China. The Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF, 海峽交流基金會)—the semi-official agency in Taiwan in charge of conducting cross-Strait negotiations in the absence of formal ties—also appealed to Beijing. The SEF stated that if family members have needs, they will respect and cooperate with the will of the family to provide necessary assistance.

In an [interview](#) with *Radio Free Asia*, Fan Shiping (范世平), a professor of political science who also teaches at National Taiwan Normal University, said that he had heard rumors about Shi’s disappearance last year. Fan added, “(He) is not a DPP [so] this is quite extreme to arrest him like this. Just like the scholar at Hokkaido University in Japan who was recently arrested. I think this will trigger a chilling effect within academic circles—unless you are very pro-CCP and pro-unification. I think [the mainland] is actually quite stupid, and everyone will feel that it is causing a chilling effect.”

In March 2017, Taiwanese NGO worker Lee Ming-che (李明哲, b. 1975) went missing in China and was later sentenced to five years in a Chinese prison for “subverting state power.” In just the past three months, three cases have been publicly disclosed involving Taiwanese persons who have been arrested and detained on the grounds of “national security” in China. In August of this year, Morrison Lee (李孟居), a government consultant in Pingtung County, traveled to Hong Kong and went missing. In September, Tsai Chin-shu (蔡金樹), the chairman of the Southern Taiwan Union of

Cross-strait Relations Associations and ardent supporter of cross-Strait exchanges, was reported missing in the China for more than a year and is [believed](#) to be detained at a prison in China's Fujian Province. Now, Shi Zhengping is missing.

Far from being isolated incidents, these cases involving Taiwan nationals who "disappear" in China track with the arbitrary and capricious detention and arrests of nationals from other countries also for supposed national security reasons by Chinese authorities. In the [case](#) of Japan, "since 2015, 13 Japanese men and women have been detained on suspicion that they were engaging in spying activities." In response to the detention of the Hokkaido professor, a group of leading Japanese China scholars issued a [public statement](#) stating that the incident has "cast a long shadow on the healthy development of the Japan-China relations," and urged Chinese authorities to understand "the sense of crisis" in Japan. In particular, "noting growing moves to cancel visits to China and review exchange programs," the statement highlighted the incident's negative impact on future academic exchanges between the two countries.

The main point: A third person from Taiwan has been reported missing within the past three months in China for ostensibly "national security" reasons. The most recent string of missing persons reports follows recent troubling revelation by the Taiwan government that 149 of its citizens had gone missing in China over the past three years since May 2016.

Taiwan and Russia Ties and the China Factor

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

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Earlier this month, Russia voiced its opposition to Taiwan's membership in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Referencing the "One-China" principle, Moscow said, "[Russia is against Taiwan's membership in the ICAO and other international organizations whose members are sovereign states only.](#)" Taiwan's government had expressed interest in attending as an observer to the ICAO Assembly in Montreal held in late September to early October. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "[Taiwan is an active and responsible member of the international civil aviation community,](#)" and thus needs "[to obtain complete and critical](#)

[information pertaining to aviation safety and security in a timely manner.](#)" By contrast, former and current officials from [Denmark](#), [France](#), [Japan](#), [New Zealand](#), [Guatemala](#), and other states advocated for Taiwan's attendance at the meeting. This latest episode reflects how Taiwan's relations with Russia continues to be constrained by the Sino-Russian strategic partnership. Yet, both Russia and Taiwan have enhanced relations in recent years through the pursuit of unofficial cooperation in trade, culture, and sports.

For the past several decades, China's relations with Russia has been the main constraining factor in the development and growth in Taiwan-Russia relations. As two regional powers that share ideological and strategic concerns about US hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region and globally, China and Russia find common cause in a mutually beneficial political and security alignment against the West. Beijing and Moscow also play important supporting roles to each other's national interests; it is a bilateral relationship that is often marked by quid pro quos. Russia recognizes Taiwan as an "[inalienable part of the Chinese territory](#)" and upholds the "[One-China](#)" principle, while the Chinese government, in return, supports [Moscow's Chechnya policy](#) among other Russian goals, including Russia's resurgence in the Middle East.

Moscow also indirectly supports Beijing's policy and pressure campaign on Taiwan through weapons sales to China. Beijing has been a major customer of Russian arms and currently ranks as the [third-largest buyer after India and Egypt](#). Beijing's procurement of Russian air defense systems, jet fighters, submarines, and airborne early-warning radar systems helped shift the military balance in the Taiwan Strait to China's advantage. [1] In 2000, Taiwan's former President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) called on Russia to cut back its arms sales to China, saying, "We hope Russia can control the quality and quantity of the arms it sells to Communist China," but to no avail. [2]

Although Taiwan itself has expressed interest in purchasing Russian weaponry, Beijing has exerted pressure on Moscow not to sell arms to Taiwan. As a result, Russia went beyond the United States in putting restrictions on specific types of interaction with Taiwan. As a follow-up to US President Bill Clinton's "[three no's](#)" statement on Taiwan in 1998 ("no" to independence for Taiwan; "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan"; or Taiwan's entry into organizations requiring statehood), Russian President Boris Yeltsin declared his country's "four no's" policy on Taiwan, adding a "no" to arms sales to the island. [3] Overall, Moscow's com-

mitment to the “One-China” principle made it nearly impossible for Taiwan to obtain mass procurement of Russian weapons. [4]

China has also incorporated its Taiwan strategy into the Sino-Russian military relationship. Beijing intended to use a Sino-Russian joint “anti-terror” drill in 2005 to exert pressure on Taiwan. According to a Russian newspaper, Russia initially wanted to hold the exercises in Xinjiang close to terrorist threats in Central Asia, but China insisted on moving the drill to the eastern coastal Zhejiang province adjacent to Taiwan and included naval assault landing exercises in an apparent effort to target the island. [5] Moscow later urged Beijing to move the drill further north to the Shandong coast, purportedly out of concern that the joint exercises targeting Taiwan might agitate the United States and Japan, not to mention Taiwan. [6]

Russia has calculated that its strategic partnership with Beijing is far too important to risk jeopardizing over Taiwan, which holds little strategic value for Moscow. At the same time, the contradictory impulses and competitive strains in the Sino-Russian relationship also mean that Russia does not want to become too reliant on its economic, political, and security relationship with China. Moscow is interested in diversifying its relations with other countries and regions beyond China. Although formal and official political ties remain restricted, Taiwan and Russia have been able to develop links and cooperate in the economic, trade, culture, arts, and sports arenas.

After Chinese political pressure impeded the establishment of bilateral representative offices for several years, the breakthrough came in 1992, when Russia finally approved an unofficial mission in Taiwan. [7] The [Moscow-Taipei Coordination Commission on Economic and Cultural Cooperation](#) (MTC), which opened in Taipei in December 1996, is a non-governmental organization that promotes unofficial relations, such as economic, cultural, and humanitarian ties, between the two sides. [8] In 1993, Taiwan set up the [Representative Office in Moscow for the Taipei-Moscow Economic and Cultural Coordination Commission](#) (台北莫斯科經濟文化協調委員會駐莫斯科代表處). Later in 2002, the Taiwan-Russia Association (台俄協會) was established to serve as an “[interactive platform between the government and the private sector](#)” and for business and academia to help enhance friendship, cooperation, and bilateral relations. In his speech at the inaugural meeting of the Taiwan-Russia Association, President Chen Shui-bian emphasized the importance of [developing friendly relations with Russia](#). Chen said

that Russia’s high-tech research and development capabilities in aerospace and biochemistry could lead to new levels of [economic cooperation](#).

Although both sides rank small in each other’s trade volumes, the economic and trade relationship has helped to propel closer links in Taiwan-Russian relations. Due to Taiwan’s large imports of natural [resources](#), mainly energy products including coal, oil, and natural gas, from Russia, Taiwan has consistently had a trade deficit with Russia. According to Taiwan’s trade statistics, Russia ranks 7th in Taiwan’s top trade deficit countries. From January to September 2018, Taiwan had a USD \$2.4 billion [trade deficit](#) with Russia. During that same period, Taiwan imported [USD \\$3.2 billion](#) from Russia, whereas Russia only imported [USD \\$0.8 billion](#) from Taiwan for an overall bilateral trade of [USD \\$4 billion](#). In 2017, Taiwan experienced a USD \$2.2 billion trade deficit with Russia; bilateral trade reached [USD \\$4.4 billion](#) that year.

In addition, Taiwan and Russia have also broadened ties through sports diplomacy and cultural events. Russia sent one of the largest sports delegations at [517 people, including 348 athletes](#), to the 2017 Summer Universiade (2017年夏季世界大學運動會) hosted in Taipei. This was a significant achievement for Taiwan, who was selected as host for this multi-sports event. While China boycotted the 2017 Summer Universiade, Russian athletes were not deterred from attending this international sporting event in Taipei. Moreover, Russia also held cultural events in Taiwan for the first time in spring 2019, purportedly [backed by the Russian government](#). The cultural events in Taiwan included celebrations of [Orthodox Easter, Victory Day, and a Slavic cultural festival](#). A Voice of America report said that the Russian government was [secretly funding](#) these cultural events in Taiwan.

Both sides have strengthened ties with the recent resumption of direct flights. After the suspension of direct flights between Taiwan and Russia due to financial difficulties in 2015, they were [resumed in May 2019](#) with direct routes between Taipei and Moscow, as well as the eastern city of Vladivostok. The reopening of direct flights may be attributed to the Taiwanese government’s 2018 decision to introduce temporary [visa waivers for Russian citizens](#) as part of a broader effort to [boost foreign tourism and business on the island](#). After a one-year trial, Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has [extended its visa-free entry](#) for Russian citizens until July 31, 2020. Russian visitors also can stay in Taiwan longer to [21 days](#), up from the previous 14-day stay. Since the visa waiver policy took effect, there has

been a steady increase in Russian tourists to Taiwan.

Approximately [3,794 Russians](#) visited Taiwan in the first quarter of 2019, an increase of [84 percent](#) from the same period last year. However, Russia does not have a reciprocal visa-free policy for Taiwan. Nonetheless, from January to May 2019, Russia's representative office issued [9,165 visas to Taiwanese tourists](#), a growth of [56 percent](#) from the previous year.

For Taiwan, Russia poses an indirect threat by supporting Chinese political and military objectives vis-à-vis Taiwan, while also providing economic benefits and alternate paths for its cultural and sports diplomacy. This is a relationship that is often overlooked in Taiwan's foreign diplomacy, but one that should be carefully nurtured to ensure that Moscow does not play a spoiler role in the security and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

The main point: Although the Sino-Russian strategic partnership serves as a constant source of political constraints on the development of Taiwan-Russia relations, bilateral exchanges in trade, culture, and sports have helped to enhance ties between the two sides.

[1] Czeslaw Tubilewicz, "The Little Dragon and the Bear: Russian-Taiwanese Relations in the Post-Cold War Period," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No. 2, April 2002, p.293.

[2] "Taiwan Asks Russia to Curtail Arms Sales to China," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, October 12, 2000.

[3] Czeslaw Tubilewicz, "The Little Dragon and the Bear: Russian-Taiwanese Relations in the Post-Cold War Period," *The Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No. 2, April 2002, p.292.

[4] Ibid.

[5] "China Exploits Joint Anti-Terror Drill with Russia to Pressure Taiwan – Paper," BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific – Political, March 17, 2005, Retrieved from Nexis Uni.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Jeanne L. Wilson, "China, Russia, and the Taiwan Issue: The View from Moscow" in *The Future of China-Russia Relations*, edited by James Bellacqua, p.294.

[8] "Russia Opens Unofficial Mission in Taiwan," BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, December 17, 1996, Retrieved from Nexis Uni.

A Taiwanese Perspective on the Impact of Hong Kong Protests in Taiwan

By: Fang-Yu Chen

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Hong Kongers have been on the streets protesting against the Extradition Law Amendment Bill (逃犯條例)—which had just been formally withdrawn—and the Hong Kong authorities for over half an year. As the police crackdown turned violent, citizens [began to demand](#) the end of violence by the authorities, fair and independent inquiry into the police behavior (currently, more and more people are demanding a comprehensive reconstruction of the police department), dropping of charges against the protesters, and a political reform to enact free and genuine universal suffrage. In this series of events, Taiwan has been mentioned quite often in the global media. This is perhaps because some [social activists](#) from both Taiwan and Hong Kong have close relationships with each other, and Taiwanese public opinion reflect strong support for the Hong Kong protesters. In June, polls showed that over [70 percent of Taiwanese](#) support the protests in Hong Kong—support is highest among the young generation. This article aims to provide a Taiwanese perspective on some apparent misunderstandings about the effects of Hong Kong protests in Taiwan and why Taiwanese people support the pro-democracy movements in the special administrative region.

Most media reports (e.g., the reports [here](#)) claim that Hong Kong events benefit President Tsai Ing-wen and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), and this image is widely spread among policy researchers and practitioners in Washington, DC. In particular, after the DPP's fiasco in the local election in November 2018, many people attributed the resurgence of President Tsai's as well as DPP's approval rate primarily to events in Hong Kong. However, this assumption does not take into consideration the totality of events.

The reversal of dissatisfaction with President Tsai's leadership began in January 2019. On January 2, China's President Xi Jinping [delivered a speech](#) and pushed for the realization of unification by initiating the plan of "Taiwan version of one country, two systems" ("兩制"台灣方案). He also reiterated that the use of force is a possible option. President Tsai [responded](#) quickly and clearly rejected the "one country, two systems" framework, and emphasized Taiwan's determination to defend democracy, freedom, and way of life. Since

then, Tsai has been described as “picking up guns” (撿到槍) and consolidating her image as the protector of Taiwan’s sovereignty.

Scholars point out that the “guns” of protecting sovereignty are actually from the people, not coming from nowhere as lucky gift to any politician. In a [China Impact Studies](#) survey conducted by the Institute of Sociology at Academia Sinica—Taiwan’s premier government academic research institution—in March 2019, 58.3 percent of respondents said that they value national security more than economic benefits (31.3 percent, when it comes to cross-Strait exchanges). This is the first time that national security is favored over economic benefits in the seven years that this question has been part of the poll. Also, according to [surveys](#) in March 2019, 79 percent of the Taiwan’s public disapprove of China’s “one country, two systems” proposal, and 84 percent oppose Beijing’s use of force against Taiwan. In other words, the “China factor” has been a salient issue, if not the most important one, since early this year. Xi’s speech quickly turned the spotlight in Taiwanese politics from local issues back to the “China factor.”

Moreover, the ruling DPP did not sit idly by waiting for external shocks such as those caused by the Hong Kong protests to garner support. After President Tsai took power in 2016, Taiwan rejected the so-called “1992 Consensus,” which is a tacit agreement of “One China, respective interpretation” (一個中國·各自表述) and a key element of cross-Strait interactions during the Ma Ying-jeou administration. The key component of the “1992 Consensus” is “One-China,” which states that Taiwan is part of China. Following the rejection of the “1992 Consensus,” China soon cut the number of tourists to Taiwan, and poached seven of Taiwan’s diplomatic ties. Despite this concerted pressure campaign, the Tsai administration did not “kowtow” (磕頭). Instead, it continued to promote the [New Southbound Policy](#) to neutralize political risks from China, develop national defense industry, increase defend budget, and negotiate with the US on several major arms sales deals that have been on the long-term wish list.

For local elections, the debates are often [less related to cross-Strait issues](#) even though this topic is always the core issue in general elections. China policy debates were also carried out in the first half of the year, especially the arms sale issues. There is a sharp contrast between the views of the DPP and the opposition party. The opposition Nationalist Party (KMT, Kuomintang) proposed to delay purchasing weapons from the United States, as lawmakers [concern](#) the escalation of

tension on cross-strait relations and the considerable costs, some even “reminds” the US not to “make profits” from the sales.

Almost all potential presidential candidates from the opposition KMT Party, including Chairman Wu Dun-yi (吳敦義), Eric Chu (朱立倫), and Wang Jing-ping (王金平) openly proposed signing a “[peace accord](#)” (和平協議) with China. The issue was highly contentious in January and February, which brought the cross-Strait issue into the center of domestic politics. Also, even after President Xi’s explicit redefinition of the “1992 Consensus,” [the KMT continues to insist](#) that Taiwan should return to the “1992 Consensus.” In short, President Tsai’s resurgent approval rate, especially people’s renewed trust in her foreign policy, can be traced back to the events in January. While the public is beginning to value national security and is becoming increasingly concerned by the China factor, it is Tsai administration’s long-term policy and the sharp contrast of the attitudes of the opposition party to the ones of the DPP that have led to this trend.

Then, Hong Kong protests significantly expanded in June. It is true that “one country, two systems” (一國兩制) has totally lost credibility due to the series of events in Hong Kong. The events did magnify the salience of the China factor and strengthen the image that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is not trustworthy. However, it is not a “gift” or external shock that “change” public opinions in Taiwan. Taiwan’s people have been wary of China long before the protests began.

Another apparent misunderstanding is reflected in the slogan “Today’s Hong Kong will be tomorrow’s Taiwan” (今日香港·明日台灣), which hints that Taiwan could lose sovereignty to CCP soon, and so the Taiwanese people must do something to prevent that from happening. In fact, this slogan [first appeared](#) during the 2014 Sunflower Movement. When a photo of a Hong Konger who participated in the Movement showing the slogan appeared online, it went viral. But recently, many people have been criticizing the usage of this slogan. Some people, such as Chairman [Wu Den-yi](#) of the opposition KMT, believe that the CCP is becoming more open-minded, and reject the claim that CCP is trying to penetrate Taiwan’s civil society to achieve the goal of unification. [Others](#) argue that Taiwan has its own sovereignty and thus, it does not have to worry about losing control to China. These arguments often come from people who do not want to criticize China or people who think that Taiwanese activists or proponents “exaggerate” the situation in Hong Kong. Indeed,

today's situation in Hong Kong may not be Taiwan's future, because what happened in Hong Kong today had already occurred in Taiwan during the pursuit of democratization in the 1980s and 1990s. However, democracy has never been a linear, one-way street, as democratic breakdown often occurs.

In fact, many Taiwanese are worried about losing their freedom and way of life, but these concerns are not necessarily tied to losing sovereignty. China is using its political and economic power to force private companies to follow certain rules and resonate government policies, and many companies have to [kowtow](#) to Beijing. For example, in early August, Taiwan's [Yi Fang Fruit Tea](#) announced support of "one country, two systems," and condemned Hong Kong protesters on *Weibo* (微博, a Chinese microblogging website). Later, a considerable number of Taiwanese beverage chain companies that are doing business in China issued similar statements to support China's official stance. Another example is the [resignation of the CEO and Chairman](#) of Cathay Pacific Airways, one of Hong Kong's best-known brands, due to the mounting government scrutiny and pressure on its employees. Chinese government demands Cathay suspend any staff who participates in or supports the protests.

Even prior to these events, Chinese kowtow pressure had been widespread in the world. In May 2018, the White House sharply criticized China's efforts to force airline companies to label "sensitive territories" including Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau, as part of China, as "[Orwellian nonsense](#)." This kind of pressure has become quite common in many places around the world. In short, fear of losing freedom due to the Chinese-style censorship is the core concern behind the slogan "today's Hong Kong will be tomorrow's Taiwan."

In conclusion, the Taiwanese support the protesters in Hong Kong because both places are on the frontlines of CCP's "sharp power." The value of freedom is not just a tool for election campaigns and it is not fair to describe protests as a gift for a particular party or a politician. The close ties between Taiwan and Hong Kong and high levels of support to each other illustrate that the importance of safeguarding the way of life and the values of freedom and rule of law is an understanding shared in both Taiwan and Hong Kong.

The main point: The Taiwanese supports Hong Kongers because both places have consensus on the importance of safeguarding the values of freedom and rule of law. The Hong Kong issue reassures (but not "causes") that the China factor is the most salient issue in

Taiwan's general election.

Taiwan's International Space: A Tale of Two Speeches

By: Michael Mazza

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At the recent Xiangshan Forum (香山論壇) in Beijing held from October 20 to 22, Chinese defense minister Wei Fenghe (魏鳳和) had harsh words for the people of Taiwan and those that support them in their desire to live freely:

"The Taiwan question concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and is a matter of China's core interests. It is extremely dangerous to repeatedly challenge China's bottom line on this question. If anyone ever tries to secede Taiwan from China, the Chinese military will take resolute actions and pay whatever price that has to be paid."

This language echoed his remarks at the [Shangri-La Dialogue](#) in June, which were arguably more inflammatory, with Wei issuing a warning directed not only at Taiwan, but specifically at the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP): "Firstly, no attempts to split China would succeed. Secondly, any foreign intervention is doomed to failure [...]. Thirdly, any underestimation of the [People's Liberation Army's] resolve and will is extremely dangerous." The warning to the DPP marked an unambiguous effort to influence the presidential election campaigns in Taiwan. The unstated, but implicit message to the island's voters: the DPP is leading you towards disaster.

The Xiangshan Forum language is not, in and of itself, remarkable. But the nature of the deliveryman adds a menacing edge, while the delivery at prominent security forums—especially Shangri-La—means the intended audiences are not only domestic and in Taiwan, but international as well. The People's Republic of China (PRC) aims to instill fear into other nations regarding their own relationships with Taiwan. Beijing wants to disabuse foreigners of the notion that they should have any interest in Taiwan's fate or have any capacity to affect that fate. Put simply, these speeches are part

and parcel of a broader PRC effort to isolate Taiwan on the international stage and instill a sense of resignation among Taiwan's people.

But in his [speech](#) last week at a Wilson Center event, American Vice President Mike Pence sought to counter Wei's message. After noting Washington's continuing commitment to the "One-China" policy, describing the United States' steadfast support for Taiwan, and taking aim at the PRC's recent efforts to poach Taiwan's diplomatic allies, the vice president stated the case for broad international engagement with Taiwan. "The international community must never forget," he asserted, "that its engagement with Taiwan does not threaten the peace; it protects peace on Taiwan and throughout the region."

The two speeches could not be more different on this point. Wei offers the prospect of military action and horrid violence; Pence offers the prospect of preserving the peace. Despite the Solomon Islands and Kiribati's decisions last month to sever formal diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan), evidence from recent years suggests that many countries find the Pence argument persuasive. At the very least, many have not been scared off by the PRC's threatening language.

Taiwan's Expanding International Space?

Conventional wisdom has it that the PRC has succeeded in constraining Taiwan's "international space"—its ability to pursue robust engagement on a bilateral basis and in multilateral forums. In many ways, this is true. Overt threats like those from Defense Minister Wei at the Shangri-La and Xiangshan forums in addition to quieter Chinese diplomacy have been successful in convincing capitals and institutions to keep their distance from Taipei.

Beijing, for example, has kept Taiwan from sending delegates, even as observers, to a variety of international gatherings, including the World Health Assembly, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) General Assembly, and the triennial International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Assembly. Despite being a full member of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) grouping, Taiwan's president is not welcome at the annual meeting and must send a non-governmental envoy in her stead.

Taiwan's formal diplomatic ties have suffered as well. The last time Taiwan (as the Republic of China) gained a new diplomatic ally was in 2007 (Saint Lucia). Meanwhile, it has seen seven diplomatic allies sever ties during the last six years (i.e., Gambia, São Tomé and

Príncipe, Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Solomon Islands, and Kiribati). Moreover, Taiwan has not concluded a free trade agreement with a non-diplomatic partner since 2013, when it concluded agreements with New Zealand and Singapore.

Beijing's efforts to symbolically erase Taiwan from the map, at least in the minds of global consumers, have proceeded apace as well. PRC aviation authorities successfully applied pressure on 36 international airlines, including the major American carriers, to force them to remove Taiwan from lists of country destinations. Now, if one flies United, for example, one books travel to Taipei rather than "Taipei, Taiwan." Zara and Medtronic [apologized](#) when PRC regulators noticed their websites listed Taiwan as a separate country from China. Gap, the clothing retailer, was made to apologize and [withdraw](#) from store shelves a t-shirt featuring a map of China that did not include Taiwan, the nine-dash line, and Arunachal Pradesh (an Indian state claimed by the PRC). Gap was not selling the shirt in the PRC, but in Canada.

Despite these unambiguous setbacks, however, there is a case to be made that Taiwan's international space has expanded in some areas even as it has been circumscribed in others. Consider its relationships with its two most important unofficial diplomatic partners. As I have argued in the *Global Taiwan Brief* [previously](#), US-Taiwan relations are the best they have been in years, if not decades. Importantly, the United States has sought to use the bilateral relationship to expand Taiwan's international space. Through the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, the United States and Taiwan have expanded Taiwan's organizational and person-to-person networks throughout the Asia-Pacific in recent years. Japan and Sweden have now joined the United States and Taiwan as formal co-sponsors on some of the GCTF workshops. These decisions from Tokyo and Stockholm suggest Taiwan is not as isolated as the PRC might like—or might like Taiwan's citizens to believe.

Indeed, the Taiwan-Japan relationship is quite healthy as well. President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan have engaged in direct communication, albeit via [Twitter](#). And although tweeting at one another is a poor substitute for telephone calls and in-person summitry, no other world leader (save those of countries with whom Taiwan enjoys formal diplomatic ties) has been willing to communicate with President Tsai in this way. (President-elect Donald Trump took a congratulatory phone call from President Tsai, but they have not spoken—or exchanged

tweets—since his swearing-in).

In January 2017, Japan’s unofficial ambassador to Taiwan [described](#) bilateral relations as “at their best” at a ceremony to change the name of Japan’s representative office in Taipei. Previously called the “Interchange Association, Japan,” the office is now known as the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association. A few months later, the semi-official body in Taipei responsible for relations with Tokyo changed its [name](#) from the Association of East Asian Relations to the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association—a change made with Japanese acquiescence.

Perhaps more importantly, Taiwan voters’ approval last November of a measure continuing the ban of food imports from Japan’s Fukushima prefecture and surrounding areas did not set back bilateral ties in the manner many had feared. The ban has proven to be a nagging nuisance, but it has not slowed down forward progress. Indeed, just days after the referendum vote, Taipei and Tokyo [signed](#) a new agreement and four memoranda of understanding designed to lower trade barriers and deepen economic relations.

Notably, Japan has not been alone in seeking to expand economic ties with Taiwan. It was [reported](#) in January that Taiwan was eager to start negotiating a bilateral investment agreement with the European Union and that the EU was still considering the possibility after first raising its intention to do so in 2015. Formal negotiations with the EU are not yet underway, but Taiwan and the United Kingdom (a major trade partner) did just hold the 22nd round of their near-annual [trade talks](#) in early October. With London eager to secure markets for its goods and services in the post-Brexit world, the time may be right for progress towards a deal.

Closer to home, the countries of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Oceania have largely greeted Tsai’s New Southbound Policy with open arms. That policy has sought to expand trade and investment relationships, societal links, and people-to-people ties. Thus far, it has been a [success](#). Many of these countries are sure to remain cautious when it comes to direct engagement with Taiwan’s government, especially with regard to areas touching on security issues, but their willingness to strengthen informal engagement is a bolster to Taiwan’s place in the world.

Explaining Taiwan’s Successes

In part, these developments are driven by personalities. Many of the Trump administration’s senior appointees, especially on the national security side, are strong supporters of a robust bilateral US-Taiwan relationship. In Japan, Prime Minister Abe is, himself, inclined to advance bilateral ties. But it is likely also the case that Chinese assertiveness, which has most Asian states worried, is driving an interest in Taiwan. There are three potential reasons for this.

First, countries inside and outside the Indo-Pacific may agree with Vice President Pence’s argument that engagement with Taiwan “protects peace on Taiwan and throughout the region.” They may recognize that Taiwan’s continuing de facto independence is necessary for the continuation of a relatively stable regional order and for the region’s economic wellbeing. Some may see strengthening informal ties with Taiwan as a way to shore up that order.

Second, it may be the case that Xi Jinping’s dark turn domestically has served to highlight just what Taiwan has to offer others—from its educational institutions, to its high-tech economy, to its social liberalism. For example, as Beijing has further restricted freedoms at home and adopted a high-tech Orwellian approach to social control, students interested in learning Chinese may be starting to see Taiwan as a more attractive place to study.

Third, it is also true that some of China’s malign activities have directly led others to pursue a closer relationship with Taiwan. For example, victims of CCP political warfare efforts have recognized that Taiwan has more experience dealing with those tactics than perhaps any other polity the world over—experience that Taiwan has been happy to share.

China’s aggressiveness in the cyber domain has similarly led its victims to Taiwan’s doorstep. Taiwan, of course, is the number-one target for Chinese hackers and sits on the figurative “front line” of the ongoing cyber conflict between China and much of the rest of the world. Others have recognized this and sought out Taiwan’s know-how as they tackle their own cyber security challenges.

It may be “extremely dangerous,” as Defense Minister Wei [put it](#), “to repeatedly challenge China’s bottom line” on the matter of Taiwan. But countries in Asia and further afield, apparently, also increasingly believe it is dangerous to exclude Taiwan from what Richard Nixon called the “family of nations.” It turns out that Taiwan’s

international space is not nearly as limited as Beijing might hope.

The main point: China has succeeded in constraining Taiwan's international space in some ways in recent years, but its regional assertiveness has also created opportunities for Taiwan to deepen ties with traditional partners and forge ties with new one.