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New Opinion Polls Highlight Trends in Taiwan's Will to Fight and Its Partisan Divide

By: Russell Hsiao

Russell Hsiao is the executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute (GTI) and editor-in-chief of the Global Taiwan Brief.

The question of whether the people of Taiwan have the will to fight to defend themselves against a Chinese military invasion remains a critical question for strategists in Washington, Taipei—and Beijing. “Arguably, *will to fight* [emp. added] is the single most important factor in war,” according to a [RAND study](#) published in 2018. Indeed, Chinese strategists have long emphasized the stratagem to “win without fighting” (不戰而屈人之兵), a [key component of which](#) is breaking the people of Taiwan's will to fight. As [concerns](#) over a possible Chinese invasion increase with tensions across the strait at their highest point since 1996, the question of the Taiwanese spirit to fight is now more relevant than ever. [1] New polling data from two organizations within Taiwan, released within days of each other near the end of 2021, shed light on the trendlines in public sentiments concerning this critical question. The survey results offer conflicting results that raise questions about the underlying implications.

In late December 2021, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (臺灣民主基金會), a national democracy and research foundation based in Taipei, released its commissioned annual survey conducted by the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University (國立政治大學 選舉研究中心). [The survey revealed](#) that nearly 72.5 percent of the Taiwanese population said that they would fight to defend Taiwan if China invaded Taiwan to compel unification, while 62.7 percent stated that they would fight if the invasion occurred because Taiwan declared *de jure* independence. While the survey results show that the majority of the population would be willing to fight if China invaded under the two specified conditions, the results still indicate a notable decrease from the annual survey's 2020 results (7.3 percent and 8.8 percent, [respectively](#)).

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4. 如果因為臺灣宣布獨立導致中國大陸武力攻打臺灣，請問您願不願意為保衛臺灣而戰？

	非常不願	不願意	願意	非常願意	無反應	回答人數
	%	%	%	%	%	N
全體	15.4%	11.3%	30.8%	31.9%	10.6%	1299
性別						
男性	14.1%	8.8%	27.7%	40.5%	8.9%	637
女性	16.7%	13.6%	33.8%	23.7%	12.1%	662
年齡						
20至29歲	11.5%	14.1%	47.2%	23.0%	4.2%	201
30至39歲	14.1%	10.9%	34.9%	35.3%	4.8%	226
40至49歲	14.5%	9.8%	29.8%	37.5%	8.5%	247
50至59歲	18.9%	9.6%	25.7%	38.3%	7.4%	237
60歲及以上	17.4%	12.9%	23.3%	28.3%	18.1%	360

5. 如果中國大陸為了統一對臺灣使用武力，請問您願不願意為保衛臺灣而戰？

	非常不願	不願意	願意	非常願意	無反應	回答人數
	%	%	%	%	%	N
全體	10.2%	8.4%	34.7%	37.8%	9.0%	1299
性別						
男性	9.3%	5.4%	29.5%	48.2%	7.6%	637
女性	11.0%	11.1%	39.7%	27.8%	10.3%	662
年齡						
20至29歲	8.8%	9.2%	48.0%	30.9%	3.2%	201
30至39歲	6.5%	11.1%	40.4%	39.6%	2.4%	226
40至49歲	8.7%	7.3%	30.8%	47.0%	6.1%	247
50至59歲	10.1%	7.4%	29.3%	46.4%	6.8%	237
60歲及以上	14.7%	7.4%	29.1%	30.9%	18.0%	360

Image: Results of the survey conducted by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy. (Image source: [Taiwan Foundation for Democracy](#))

The 2021 TFD survey contrasts sharply with a poll conducted by *Global View Monthly* (遠見雜誌, GVM), a magazine published by one of Taiwan’s major publishers, Commonwealth Publishing (天下文化). Released around the same time as the TFD survey, the annual “Survey of Popular Sentiment Trends in Taiwan” (台灣民心動向調查) for 2021 asked respondents a *similar* question relating to their will to fight. Specifically, [respondents were asked](#): “If war erupted across the strait, would you be willing yourself or let your family members fight on the battlefield?” In contrast to the results of the TFD survey, 51.3 percent of the respondents indicated that they were “not willing,” with 40.3 percent indicating that they were “willing” to fight themselves or let their family members fight, while 8.5 percent indicated “no response.”

In an article reporting the results, GVM dived further into the data, which revealed that a majority of female respondents indicated that they were “not willing” (61.2 percent), whereas 50.7 percent of males were either “willing” to fight or to let their family members fight on the battlefield. Among those in the 20-29 age cohort, 70.2 percent were “not willing” (which directly contradicts the data provided by the TFD poll, finding 70.2 to 78.9 percent to be “willing”); while among those in the 30-39 age cohort, 47.9 percent were “will-

表5-2 如果兩岸發生戰爭，你願不願意讓你或家人上戰場參戰？(%)

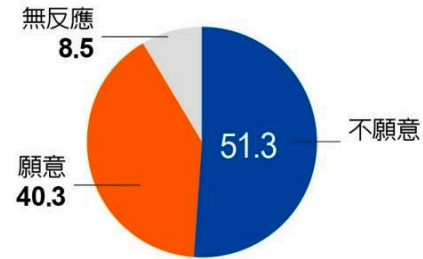


Image: Results of the “Survey of Popular Sentiment Trends in Taiwan” conducted by *Global View Monthly*, which asks “If war were to erupt in the Taiwan Strait, would you be willing to allow your family members to join the fight?” (Image Source: [Global View Monthly](#))

ing” to fight or let their family members fight on the battlefield. The most scathing of the results [highlights the breakdown](#) of the responses based on party identification. For those who identified as pan-Blue (Kuomintang *et al.*), 70.8 percent indicated that they were “not willing;” 58.6 percent of independents were “not willing;” and 62.4 percent of those who identified as pan-Green (Democratic Progressive Party *et al.*) expressed that they were “willing” to fight or let their family members fight on the battlefield.

Taking the average of the responses to the two scenarios posited in the TFD poll and thereby minimizing the bias of a particular scenario-based response, 67.6 percent of respondents indicated that they would be willing to fight. The near 30-point spread between the TFD and GVM polls of those generally willing to fight is striking. While there are discrepancies in the framing of the question in the two polls—which could affect how people interpret the meaning of the questions, although it would hard to conceive of that accounting entirely for the wide spread—what else accounts for the stark difference?

Polling methodology aside, other factors influencing the responses to the GVM poll could be perceived military readiness and international support, which were also surveyed by GVM. Finally, and perhaps most relevant, such issues can be heavily influenced by [partisan convictions](#) to either support the ruling party or to oppose it, especially if other incentives are not involved. .

In another question related to the prospects for war, the GVM survey asked: “If war erupted across the strait, do you think the Taiwan government has made sufficient preparations to fight a war against mainland China?” According to the survey, 52.1 percent of the respondents answered “no,” whereas 35.2 percent of the respondents answered “yes.” Again, when the responses [were sorted by party identification](#), the results were conspicuous. For those who identified as pan-Blue, 74.8 percent answered “no” and 58.7 percent of independents also answered “no;” whereas 62 percent of those who identified as pan-Green answered “yes.” In another related question, [the survey asked](#): “If war erupted across the strait, what do you think will be the result?” Among the respondents, 42.8 percent believed that it would result in a negotiated settlement, 30.5 percent believed that the mainland would win, and 9.2 percent believed that Taiwan would win.

In the [report](#) “Surveying the Taiwanese Psychology on Self-Defense and Self-Determination,” Austin Wang, an assistant professor of Political Science at the University of Nevada, noted: “How Taiwan’s most important security partner the United States acts would undoubtedly influence the Taiwanese people’s willingness to defend against an invasion by China.” “The descriptive analysis provides the direct evidence that manipulating perception of collective action can strongly influence Taiwanese people’s willingness to fight against China’s invasion,” Wang [added](#).

The survey-backed observation was supported by [another study](#) conducted by Lt. Col. (ret.) Mark Stokes and others at the Arlington-based think tank Project 2049 Institute. In “Preparing for the Nightmare: Readiness and Ad hoc Coalition Operations in the Taiwan Strait,” Stokes observed:

“National will and morale are also related to perceived international support. The PLA expends significant resources on manipulating morale among the general population and particularly within the ROC armed forces. The degree of perceived international support is a critical yet intangible factor in morale, particularly during a crisis.”

According to the [RAND study](#): “With very few exceptions, all wars and almost all battles are decided by

matters of human will: Breaking the enemy’s will to fight while sustaining one’s own will to fight is the key to success in battle.” On both sides of the human will coin, in the case of Taiwan, the role of the United States is perhaps more critical than any other external factor. To this question, the [GVM survey](#) asked: “If a military conflict occurs across the strait, how would the United States help Taiwan?” Among the respondents: 33.7 percent said that the United States would sell arms to Taiwan, 9.0 percent said the United States would provide armaments to defend Taiwan, and only 10.2 percent believed that the United States would jointly (with Taiwan forces) fight in Taiwan.

A [recent study](#) published by the US National Defense University summed up this pressing issue succinctly: “Taiwan’s will to resist Chinese pressure depends, in part, on the speed and efficacy of U.S. intervention in a conflict.” Indeed, “China’s basic advantages in any Taiwan scenario include a high level of political will—reunification [sic] is a ‘[core interest](#)’ for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which aspires to resolve the problem on its own terms by the centennial of the People’s Republic of China in 2049.”

To be sure, it is not clear what precisely contributed to the huge difference reflected in the results of the TFD and GVM polls. At the very least, this should raise questions about the certainty of any conclusion that can be drawn from a single data set concerning Taiwan’s will to fight. But as these discrepancies demonstrate, [more assessments](#) are clearly required to understand the deeper trend and its implications.

Setting aside the reason for the stark difference between the two surveys (a matter outside the scope of this brief), and taking each poll independently of the other, two takeaways are clear: there was a notable decrease in Taiwan’s will to fight from 2020 to 2021, and there is a sharp partisan divide on the issue. What are the preliminary policy implications? For Taiwan, the political leadership must consider, as the [RAND study](#) indicated, “[t]he integration of will to fight concepts into military education, training, planning, assessments, international engagement, and operations.” In short, investments and innovation in *both* its civilian and military political warfare apparatuses are essential. And, as the United States and her allies consider ways to strengthen integrated deterrence for Taiwan,

[sustaining and enhancing its will](#) to fight ought to be an integral part of that strategy.

The main point: New polling data from two organizations within Taiwan released near the end of 2021 indicate a decrease in Taiwan’s “will to fight” from 2020 to 2021 and a sharp partisan divide on the issue.

[1] According to the RAND study, the national will to fight can be defined as: “the determination of a national government to conduct sustained military and other operations for some objective, even when the expectation of success decreases or the need for significant political, economic, and military sacrifices increases.”

Deterrence by Uncertainty: A New Defense Posture for Taiwan

By: Eric Chan

Eric Chan is an adjunct fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute and a senior airpower strategist for the US Air Force. The views in this article are the author’s own, and are not intended to represent those of his affiliate organizations.

Recent debates over Taiwan defense posture have led to the spawning of a veritable zoo of strategies named after animals: the [porcupine](#), the [pit-viper](#), and the [poison-frog](#). These differing strategies come from disagreements over the nature of [asymmetry and deterrence](#). Furthermore, these discussions are made even more complicated by several other factors:

1. [Time](#): Optimal Taiwan and US responses to People’s Liberation Army (PLA) developments will differ, depending on the most probable timeframe of invasion.
2. [Balance of most likely vs most dangerous](#): The ongoing gray zone warfare of today, versus the potential for an all-out invasion tomorrow.
3. [Unilateral defense versus a bilateral/multilateral response](#): Taiwan facing off against China alone will prioritize different methods of deterrence and operational defense, in contrast to a scenario where Taiwan is securely inside a US or multilateral defense umbrella

Ultimately, these disagreements and factors all boil down to one overarching question: *What most scares the Chinese Communist Party?*

In this article, I will look at existing concepts of deterrence as well as the PRC concept of *war control* (戰爭控制). I will then look at methods that Taiwan can take to weaken Chinese Communist Party (CCP) confidence in its ability to achieve war control—and thereby enhance Taiwan’s capacity for effective deterrence.

Denial or Punishment

The two classic Western approaches to deterrence are *deterrence by denial* and *deterrence by punishment*. The deterrence by denial strategy “[seeks to deter an action by denying a potential aggressor confidence in attaining its objectives](#).” Broadly speaking, Western advocates for a Taiwan asymmetric “porcupine strategy” [adhere to this method for deterrence](#), under the logic that increasing Taiwanese operational lethality and survivability will: (1) raise the perceived costs on the PLA of a potential invasion; and (2) provide time for the United States to intervene and tip the balance of power in Taiwan’s favor.

Alternatively, the focus of deterrence by punishment “[is not the direct defense of the contested commitment but rather threats of wider punishment that would raise the cost of an attack](#).” Taiwan’s interest in acquiring [long-range, “deep strike” platforms](#) is a reflection of this, as a less extreme version of the [2004-era “whisper” campaign](#) (one [occasionally revived since](#)) of Taiwanese contingency planning for a strike on China’s Three Gorges Dam (三峽大壩). The logic here is that threatening the CCP with strikes on major targets beyond the immediate battlefield would: (1) raise the threat to senior Party members’ personal safety; (2) threaten vast disruption in the Chinese domestic economy; and (3) increase the risk of social unrest and the long-term economic costs from the effects of war, even in the case of an operationally successful Taiwan campaign.

Both methodologies have their respective strengths and weaknesses. The main strength of deterrence by denial is that it is an inherently defensive method, focusing on a “[large number of small things](#)” to bolster resiliency. Thus, it is relatively cost effective and fits in well with the possibility of US intervention, which

above all would require time to carry out. The main weakness of deterrence by denial is that *because* it is inherently defensive, it grants both initiative and a sense of control to the CCP: the main military calculation then simply becomes an attrition calculation of how big the symmetric PLA hammer must be to break the asymmetric Taiwan shield as quickly as possible. Moreover, from the perspective of Taiwan's domestic politics, telling voters that in order to credibly deter China, Taiwan must be prepared to turn the entire island into a new Stalingrad—in the hopes of holding out until the Americans *may possibly* intervene—is not a position that is particularly politically compelling.

Deterrence by punishment, on the other hand, relies on the mantra that the best defense is a good offense. There are multiple layers to deterrence by punishment, ranging from the threat of attacks on tactical targets such as PLA amphibious landing ships and port facilities; to strikes on mid-tier targets like CCP regional offices and the PLA Eastern Theater Command (東部戰區軍) headquarters; and then to “strategic” strikes on cities and infrastructure (such as the Three Gorges Dam). The main strength of deterrence by punishment is that it introduces uncertainty: for instance, if Taiwan had a credible ability to either take out a significant portion of the PLA amphibious assault capacity, or to strike directly at Xi Jinping (習近平) and the other members of the Politburo Standing Committee, then this would create risks that wouldn't be as easily quantifiable or controllable. In fact, this would be a deterrent capability even exceeding that of the United States, as China would not be able to as credibly threaten Taiwan with a nuclear response.

Unfortunately, the main weakness of deterrence by punishment is that it involves dividing deterrence capabilities from warfighting capabilities. If the CCP accepts a higher risk tolerance and invades anyway, then by definition most of the deterrent factor will have dissipated. Moreover, given the number of potential targets, Taiwan's missile inventory—as well as its targeting capabilities—would need to increase exponentially for this to be truly credible.

Thus, Taiwan is left in an uncomfortable position wherein both methods of deterrence have significant gaps which will likely not be filled in the relevant time period ([this decade](#)). These methods of deterrence

also do little against China's current and intensifying gray zone warfare campaign. New methods of deterrence must be explored.

Controlling War

In my [previous article](#) for *Global Taiwan Brief*, I discussed how the concept of integrated deterrence is a US strategy of improving coordination and resiliency among its allies and partners to deter China, while the US military undergoes a feverish [interwar period](#) of experimentation and technology integration to establish a better balance of conventional deterrence a decade down the line. In short, this is a combination of both methods of deterrence (although it is more heavily weighted towards deterrence by punishment). It threatens deterrence by punishment via a global network able to squeeze China's economy—as well as holding out the prospect of China having to fight on both a regional and global scale against multiple nations. In the longer-term, technology sharing and development will allow the US to more credibly threaten deterrence by denial.

Taiwan, of course, does not have the resources and the global reach of the United States, and thus must develop its own methods of deterrence. However, the integrated deterrence concept points to an area of Chinese weakness that Taiwan can consider for its own deterrent efforts: war control.

War control, 戰爭控制 in Chinese, has been discussed extensively since the PLA started using the term [circa 2001](#). Original Western translations of this term tended to lump it in with concepts of [escalation control or crisis management](#). However, as the concept developed, it became clear that unlike the Western concept of escalation control—which is heavily weighted to crisis de-escalation as a goal—Chinese war control has moved away from “[war prevention](#)” towards “[shaping warfighting intensity to the Party's advantage](#)”. This means that escalation is seen as a tool, and that *unintended escalation*, not *de-escalation*, is the primary PLA concern.

This is reflected in PLA writings of military actions in a crisis or conflict. Alison A. Kaufman's 2016 article identifies [three key principles](#) of war control that PLA writers have highlighted: (1) focus on strategic initiatives; (2) seize the initiative; and (3) preserve stability

and flexibility. Ms. Kaufman identifies some troubling threads—namely support for pre-emptive strikes, both kinetic and non-kinetic, to display credible deterrence and to seize the initiative. PLA operational concepts developed since then have integrated elements of these principles, [particularly the importance of information dominance, as key to both war control and the start of system destruction warfare](#).

Flooding the Zone

For Taiwan, then, undermining the PLA sense of war control represents a method of tailoring deterrence. Taking the opposite of the PLA war control approach would then mean:

1. Forcing the PLA to fixate on tactical problems;
2. Demonstrating that attempts to seize the initiative will lead to strategic blowback;
3. Impressing on the CCP that attempts to wage war will result in serious economic and political instability.

In short, this approach would demonstrate that a war would not be controllable; that it would be prolonged; and that it would involve a high level of risk to Party control.

What might this look like in practice? The Taiwan army and air force could practice rapid breakout surges from dispersal and cover involving the coordination of ground based air defense, electronic warfare, and air assets, in order to demonstrate survivability against missile strikes—and the ability to create targeted small windows where the PLA Air Force would not be able to ensure air dominance or even air superiority. It would also involve practicing rapid mine-laying, both real and decoy, by the Taiwan coast guard, navy, and air force.

Similarly, demonstrating the capabilities of long-range artillery on Kinmen and Matsu, both [new](#) and [old](#), through both practiced strikes on fixed installations (say, mockups of the Party headquarters on Xiamen, [廈門]), as well as on mockups of PLA Navy landing ships and ports, would force the PLA to expend time, resources, and planning to knock them out. Construction of new “cut-and-cover” bunkers, both real and decoy, would also complicate strikes, especially when assets are constantly moved between one bunker and

the next.

On a diplomatic-economic front, quiet discussions should take place involving the US, Australia, Japan, and the EU regarding contingency planning, potential economic actions, and diplomatic pressure to be initiated if China crosses over the threshold from “quasi-war” to war—through multiple scenarios, ranging from a “bolt from the blue” attack to a [contrived incident](#) to a [Crimea-like seizure of Kinmen](#).

Conclusion

The purpose of all this is similar to, but not quite the same as, deterrence by denial or deterrence by punishment; rather, it is deterrence through uncertainty, almost a melding of the two traditional deterrence concepts. These effects can be further compounded if they are executed simultaneously, forcing a huge amount of information, risk assessment, and decision-making onto the CCP/PLA. It will be difficult for the PLA to achieve information dominance when they themselves will need to face an escalating cascade of risks ranging from the tactical (Taiwan-specific), to the operational (responses from other Pacific powers), and upwards to the strategic (global backlash). Moreover, the presence of uncertainty and other hard-to-quantify factors will have the end result of disrupting the CCP’s [use of force calculations](#)—especially when these types of uncertainties may not be factored into calculations that are done under the assumption that the PLA will only need to fight a so-called “informatized local war” versus a global war.

PLA war control seeks simplicity. To deter the PLA, Taiwan should look at complexity.

The main point: The PLA concept of war control seeks to promote flexibility in warfighting intensity, in order to increase the Party’s advantage while preserving stability. To best deter the CCP from being confident in the PLA’s ability to attack, Taiwan should seek deterrent methods that promote complexity and uncertainty on the part of the PLA.

Xi's Top Taiwan Hand Targets 'Hostile Forces' in Taiwan's 'Green' and 'Blue' Camps

By: J. Michael Cole

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

In December 2021, the head of an influential think tank in Beijing argued that not only pro-Taiwan independence members in Taiwan's "green camp," but also anti-communist elements within the "blue camp," should be treated by Beijing as "hostile forces" to China. The Tainan-born Wang Yifu (汪毅夫), president of the Beijing-based [National Society of Taiwan Studies](#) (NSTS, 全國台灣研究會), [1] a think tank regarded as Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) General Secretary Xi Jinping's (習近平) top think tank on Taiwan affairs, made the argument in a [December 15 commentary](#) published by the Hong Kong-based *China Review News* (中國評論新聞). [2]

According to Wang, the "homogenization" of "reactionaries" from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) and other pro-Taiwan independence parties, alongside "diehards" from the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT, 中國國民黨) is a dangerous phenomenon—one that unites both forces in a way that hinders "reunification." While Beijing has been consistent in its targeting of, and opposition to, DPP "reactionaries"—among whom Wang lists former President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and current President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文)—the CCP has been more reluctant to criticize the KMT, which for many years it regarded as a potential partner for "reunification." As such, while Beijing vehemently opposed Taiwan independence (*taidu*, 台獨), it tended to tacitly tolerate support within Taiwan for the Republic of China (ROC), or *huadu* (華獨) [3]—largely due to the fact that the latter tended to be associated with regimes that, like Beijing, opposed Taiwan independence.

Wang, however, claims that this view has misled the CCP, which has only awakened to this reality recently. Under Xi, CCP officials have begun to [express discontent](#) with the KMT's ostensible lack of enthusiasm for unification. Moreover, the blue camp's support for the "status quo," which is tantamount to *de facto* ROC independence, has been reinforced by the KMT's stated



Image: Wang Yifu, the director of a prominent CCP-controlled think tank on Taiwan policy, speaking at a conference in December 2020. (Source: [National Society of Taiwan Studies](#))

opposition to the "one country, two systems" (一國兩制) formula for unification, which Xi insists upon despite the debacle in Hong Kong. In fact, Wang notes that in its latest political platform, the KMT simultaneously stated its opposition to both "Taiwan independence" and "one country, two systems." Wang also argues that the first KMT "diehard" to stigmatize the "one country, two systems" framework was former President Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), who said in 1984 that the formula was a form of deception meant to confuse the world about the possibility of peaceful coexistence between the two Chinas.

In the broader sense, Wang argues, anyone who does not recognize Taiwan as a province of the People's Republic of China (PRC) should therefore be regarded as an enemy of Beijing. Consequently, the CCP should increase its support for a "unified patriotic" force to accomplish the "reunification" of Taiwan with China.

Wang is [heavily involved in united front efforts](#) aimed at Taiwan. Among other things, he served as the vice governor of Fujian Province from 1998 to 2008 (while Xi was governor), and was chairman of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots (ACFTC, 中華全國台灣同胞聯誼會)—a [united front affiliate of the CCP](#) that looks after Taiwanese who live and work in the PRC—in 2012. In 2017, the ACFTC was part of a [new strategy by Beijing](#) to attract Taiwanese youth and small businesses.

Implications

Although it is impossible to say at this point whether Wang's remarks reflect an official change in Beijing's approach to Taiwan and its main political parties, his commentary reflects, as mentioned above, a gradual awakening to the facts on the ground in Taiwan. Chief among them is the fact that both main political parties oppose unification with the PRC, and both have also internalized and embraced—however imperfectly in some cases—democracy as the way of life for the people of Taiwan (or the ROC). Wang (and Beijing) are therefore absolutely correct in regarding *taidu* and *huadu* as fundamental impediments to the CCP's efforts to annex Taiwan peacefully. A change of tactic—if indeed one is in the offing—would conceivably aim to undermine the further homogenization of these two related phenomena, given that increased unity between the “blue” and “green” camp strengthens Taiwan's ability to counter China's ambitions. More and more, Beijing will likely seek to turn the narrative into a zero-sum one, compelling the people of Taiwan to make a choice between independence or unification with the PRC. Furthermore, it will seek to erode the “gray zone” that currently exists within the KMT's “status quo,” and the *huadu* that many party members and voters continue to embrace.

Such a policy would have serious consequences for the Taiwanese who currently live and work in China, as well as those, such as the artistic community, whose careers depend on access to the PRC market. By forcing Taiwanese to clearly state their support for unification with the PRC—as well as their opposition to not only *taidu* but also *huadu*—Beijing could exacerbate polarization within Taiwanese society. Additionally, it could effectively create an entire new category of Taiwanese who can no longer make a living in, or have access to, the Chinese market. In other words, merely stating one's opposition to Taiwan independence while remaining vague on *huadu* would no longer be sufficient. The “status quo,” therefore, is no longer an option or a way for such persons to buy time.

Within Taiwan, the effects of such a shift may already have been felt. In November of last year, retired army major general Yu Pei-chen (于北辰), a former head of the KMT's “deep blue” Huang Fu Hsing faction (黃復興) in Taoyuan, received [death threats](#) aimed at his

wife and daughter, reportedly due to his criticism of the CCP. “You will die one by one, and your wife will be the first one to die,” said the letter, signed by the Taipei branch of the little-known pro-unification Chinese National Revival Squad (中華民族復興鋤奸隊) and using a one-time IP address [located in Germany](#). Taiwanese law-enforcement authorities have launched an investigation to determine the nature of this organization.

A proud soldier who [led the protests against President Tsai's pension reform in 2016](#), Yu is vehemently *huadu* (as most generals aged 55 and below tend to be) and has also been heavily criticized by other members of the KMT over his criticism of some of the party's policies, which he argued were undermining its appeal. His sudden [dismissal as head of Huang Fu Hsing](#) in September 2020 was also related to his comments. In late December, Yu and his wife [quit the KMT](#), bemoaning the fact that [not a single party member](#) had reached out to him after receiving the threatening missive (President Tsai and Premier Su Tseng-chang [蘇貞昌], on the other hand, did). Commenting on the affair, Yu lamented that the KMT appears to have forgotten who its principal enemy is. Asked by reporters whether he would join the DPP, Yu [replied](#) that this was “absolutely impossible.”

The unwillingness of anyone within the blue camp to condemn the death threats against Yu's family suggests that the CCP's attempts to silence moderate members of the KMT — in other words, the “homogenized” supporters of *huadu* — may already be having an effect. Simultaneously, more radical, and possibly more pro-unification, voices have been taking over both the narrative and the party itself. The abolition of *huadu* as a “tolerable” counter to *taidu* within Taiwanese politics can only result in greater tensions in the Taiwan Strait, as well as greater instability in Taiwan, as Beijing collaborates more closely with and empowers elements within Taiwan whose views are antithetical to both the DPP and the mainstream “blue” camp.

Depending on the future leadership of the KMT and the influence that factions such as Huang Fu Hsing have within it, the party could, in the name of retaining a modicum of access to the CCP, become a tacit ally in Beijing's hardened stance on unification versus independence in the Taiwan Strait. Conversely, the emergence of leadership in the blue camp that is

willing to defy more conservative forces and factions within the KMT could ensure greater unity in Taiwan. In the face of the threat posed by China, these groups could focus on the real overlap that, however rarely acknowledged, exists between *taidu* and *huadu*. For this to happen, however, the KMT leadership will have to declare, in no uncertain terms, that its principal enemy isn't the DPP, but rather the CCP.

The main point: For decades, the CCP tacitly tolerated the existence of Republic of China *de facto* independence while maintaining an uncompromising stance on Taiwanese independence. But that may be changing, as Beijing realizes that the two forms of independence it faces in Taiwan are, when united, the greatest impediment to “peaceful unification.”

[1] For additional background on the NSTS, see, e.g., Russell Hsiao, “Former State Councilor Becomes Chairman of PRC’s National Society of Taiwan Studies,” *Global Taiwan Brief* 2, Issue 8 (2017), accessed January 11, 2022, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2017/02/22-gtb-2-8/#RH022217>.

[2] *China Review News* is a Hong Kong-based publication associated with the China Association for Promotion of Chinese Culture (CAPCC, 中華文化發展促進會). The CAPCC is a key platform of the Political Work Department (中央軍委政治工作部) under the Central Military Commission (CMC, 中央軍事委員會), which is headed by Xi Jinping. It is actively involved in the promotion of a cross-Strait “peace accord” and “re-unification.”

[3] Rather than an actual movement, *huadu* encompasses people in Taiwan [predominantly *waishengren* (外省人), or “Mainlanders”] who support the Republic of China, its institutions and values. As such, they tend to oppose both Taiwan independence—even if they agree on the need to defend their democratic way of life—and unification with the People’s Republic of China. [The *hua* in *huadu* comes from *Zhonghua Minguo* (中華民國), or Republic of China, in Chinese.]

What’s Next in US-Taiwan Technology Relations?

By: Erik M. Jacobs

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Building US-Taiwan Ties

In December 2021, US Secretary of Commerce (DOC) Gina Raimondo and Taiwan’s Minister of Economic Affairs Wang Mei-hua (王美花) announced that the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO)—in partnership with DOC’s International Trade Administration (ITA) and the Taiwan Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA)’s Bureau of Trade (BOFT)—will cooperate through a new [Technology Trade and Investment Collaboration \(TTIC\) Framework](#) that aims to strengthen critical supply chains, including semiconductor supply chains.

The Commerce Department’s move is a sign that the Biden Administration may seek to continue some of the Trump Administration’s successful policies aimed at deepening ties with Taiwan as a part of a broader free and open Indo-Pacific strategy. Importantly, these moves show a continuation of policies aimed at corraling Chinese influence and strength across all aspects of critical and emerging technologies, with a special emphasis on supply chains.

Dialogue Tracks

The Biden Administration’s decision to continue Trump-era initiatives such as the [US-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Dialogue \(EPPD\)](#) show how important the US-Taiwan relationship is to US national security and the robust US-Taiwan economic relationship. At the [second meeting of the EPPD in November 2021](#), organized by AIT and TECRO, US Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment Jose W. Fernandez met with Taiwan Minister of Science and Technology Wu Tsung-tsong (吳政忠) to discuss collaboration on critical and emerging technology issues, and their impact on the existing US-Taiwan economic relationship. Specifically, the two discussed countering foreign economic coercion, strengthening 5G network security, and advancing collaboration across science and technology (S&T) fields.

In October 2021, Sandra Oudkirk, director of AIT, emphasized the importance of Taiwan’s role in building “resilient” and “safe” supply chains, stressing [the](#)

[importance of US-Taiwan ties to ensure they remain safe and secure](#). She also added that in order to do that, some of both the components and products of the supply chain would need to be built on American and other nations' shores. AIT has played a key role in building up Taiwanese direct investment in the United States, including a Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) [plant in Arizona](#) on which the company will spend an estimated USD \$12 billion to develop [as many as six factories](#) within a ten- to fifteen-year span.



Image: US Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy, and Environment Jose W. Fernandez and Taiwan Minister of Science and Technology Wu Tsung-tsong meet during the first round of the “US-Taiwan Economic Prosperity Dialogue” in 2020. (Source: [Taiwan News](#))

TSMC’s Role in US-Taiwan Ties

TSMC plays a unique role in the within the US-Taiwan relationship as a “technological powerhouse” and a key provider of components for many critical technology industries. Currently, TSMC produces 92 percent of the world’s advanced chips and is the world’s largest contract chip producer. TSMC’s critical lines of production include national security-sensitive chips for F-35 fighter jets, high-performance chips for US military suppliers, and other Department of Defense (DoD)-approved military-grade chips, leading to [calls from US lawmakers](#) for TSMC to move some of its production capabilities to the US. TSMC’s announcement of its new production facility is a shift in TSMC’s production model, but some national security concerns may remain, especially regarding the threat of intellectual

property theft when [working with more commercial manufacturers in a “zero-trust” environment](#). TSMC has taken steps to allay some of these concerns by providing information to the Department of Commerce in accordance with recent export control rules and by [stopping the fulfillment of new orders from Huawei \(華為\)](#) in response to Trump Administration-era export control rules.

The global semiconductor shortage has also had an impact on major US manufacturers that rely on TSMC’s advanced microelectronics, including Apple, Qualcomm, Nvidia, AMD, and Intel. [In recent discussions with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen \(蔡英文\)](#), US lawmakers called for Taiwan to work directly with the US, Japan, and South Korea to show a “united front against China” amid shortages in the automotive and consumer electronics sectors. Additionally, industry observers have argued that it would be wise for TSMC to [diversify its production](#), in a manner similar to how it is pursuing production opportunities and shifting some of its critical technology supply chains [back to the United States](#).

Telecommunications Issues

Another important potential avenue of cooperation that Taiwan and the United States should pursue is further coordination on the development of 5G open radio access networks (RAN). Open RAN networks provide an alternative method for developing, testing, and deploying advanced 5G telecommunications networks that are not reliant on inputs from Chinese companies (namely Huawei). Taiwan represents an excellent opportunity as an export market for US 5G capabilities and ICT companies who specialize in telecommunications hardware. Taiwan and the US have worked in conjunction on these issues for several years, including at an GM Taiwan event which [promoted integrated 5G solutions between US and Taiwan companies](#) and a 2021 event showcasing US software solutions for Open RAN technology. The US is currently working with [Japan and other Quadrilateral Security Dialogue \(Quad\) nations](#) (Australia, Japan, and India) on Open RAN technology, and coordination on this issue could be a way for Taiwan to engage the Quad on emerging technology issues.

Third Country Coordination with Japan

Earlier this year, the 7th [Japan-Taiwan Exchange Sum-](#)

[mit](#) was held in Kobe, Japan. The event was attended by ruling and opposition party members alike from over 70 different governments across Japan. During the proceedings, leaders drafted [statements calling for deeper Japan-Taiwan ties](#) in various fields, in line with the proposed draft of a Japanese *Taiwan Relations Act*. However, mention of technology and technology policy coordination was conspicuously absent from both documents. At the bilateral level, Taiwan and Japan should work towards deeper government-to-government technology policy coordination—including, but not limited to, joint research and development (R&D) programs. Such collaboration could also include efforts to ensure supply chain reliability and stability, particularly in light of China’s growing might in the region, and the inherent security and [economic risks](#) that accompany working with [US-blacklisted](#) Chinese technology companies like Huawei and Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC, 中芯国际集成电路制造有限公司).

Building on these efforts to work in conjunction with the Quad more broadly is another way that Taiwan can augment its influence in developing [shared and secure supply chains](#) that are free of potentially dangerous Chinese inputs, protecting national security issues in the process. The September 2021 [Joint Statement from Quad Leaders](#) emphasized the importance of developing technology that is in accordance with human rights, rule of law, and democratic values, making free and democratic Taiwan a natural cooperation partner.

Commercial Ties

Coordinated policy efforts at the governmental level would augment robust developments between Taiwanese and Japanese companies at the commercial level. For example, TSMC has [announced it will build its first-ever chip plant in Japan](#) to mitigate global supply chain challenges. Supported by [billions of dollars from the Japanese government](#), this Kumamoto-based facility would focus on the development of 22- and 28-nanometer technology in conjunction with leading Japanese fabricators. Once online, this project is expected to produce 45,000 12-inch wafers per month, marking a shift away from TSMC’s decades-long Taiwan-based production approach. TSMC has also partnered with world-leading Japanese companies to work on 3D semiconductor production through Japan’s

National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology in Tsukuba, Ibaraki Prefecture, which is one of Japan’s leading S&T R&D hubs and was the host city of the 2020 [G20 Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Digital Economy](#). This project [will also receive support from the Japanese government](#).

The United States and Japan have a long history of technology and technology policy coordination at the working- and senior-level, and these relationships present a strong opportunity for third-country cooperation with Taiwan. The [16th Joint Working-Level Committee \(JWLC\) Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation](#) between Japan and the United States explicitly recommended working together with third countries on S&T projects and issues. To this end, Taiwan is a natural partner for key issues including secure supply chains of semiconductors and microelectronics, as well as R&D in critical and emerging technology fields such as artificial intelligence and quantum information science. The United States and Japan are also overdue to meet at the ministerial level for the 15th Joint High-Level Committee (JHLC) Meeting on Science and Technology Cooperation. The next meeting of this dialogue would be the ideal setting for the two nations to add a new stream of third-country cooperation with Taiwan in the [newly established technology track](#) of the JHLC, especially when it comes to secure supply chains.

Mitigating China Risks

While TSMC is deepening ties with the US and Japan, even when it comes to national security-specific and defense-related technologies, potential risks to deeper technological ties remain—as, for example, TSMC is also [shoring up its production facilities in mainland China](#). These deeper ties pose potential national security and intellectual property theft risks for sensitive programs and leading-edge technologies that must be addressed as ties between Washington and Taipei (or Taipei and other third nations) grow, especially across national-security specific supply chains. Moves towards security assurances throughout chip production in an assumed zero-risk environment will go a long way toward supporting DoD concerns regarding foreign manufactured components, even with the most trustworthy partners.

The main point: The Biden Administration appears to

be continuing several of the Trump Administration's successful policies and initiatives aimed at deepening ties with Taiwan as a part of a broader free and open Indo-Pacific strategy. Supply chain diversification and resiliency will continue to dominate key elements of the US-Taiwan technology relationship in 2022.

A Resilient Taiwan Needs Presidential Succession for Continuity of Government

By: Shirley Kan

Shirley Kan is an independent specialist in Asian security affairs who retired from working for Congress at CRS and serves as a founding Member of GTI's Advisory Board.

In her new year's address, Republic of China (ROC) President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) focused on a "[Resilient Taiwan](#)" (堅韌台灣) and "[stable governance](#)," but she did not discuss presidential succession—despite the fact that Taiwan faces China's "decapitation" among other threats. If Taiwan is to be resilient, then leaders across parties need to establish a clear, credible, and comprehensive plan for presidential succession. A behind-the-scenes succession list apparently exists. A "porcupine" is useless if its head is cut off, which is one of the reasons that this author objects to this over-used analogy for Taiwan's defense. How can Taiwan proactively ensure continuity of its leadership, government, and military command and operations?

"Decapitation" to Abolish the ROC

Taiwan has a relatively short history of democratic presidential succession and transfer of power. In 2000, this author was involved in meetings in Washington for Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴) (then an official of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) and now Taiwan's Representative to the United States) to learn how to conduct Taiwan's first-ever presidential transition from one party to another when the Kuomintang (KMT, 中國國民黨) lost ruling power for the first time in an election.

Nonetheless, under China's threats, it would be irresponsible for the leaders of Taiwan's major political parties to fail to establish sustained presidential succession in order to prevent chaos, political paralysis,

or powerless government. Taiwan already has experienced incidents and knows of China's threat of "decapitation." The President is the head of the ROC as well as Commander-in-Chief of the military with authority over the Minister of National Defense, who directs orders to the Chief of General Staff (CGS) to command the armed forces. Taiwanese military culture is centralized, highly risk-averse with no war experience, and based extensively on personalities. The President leads the people's will to fight. The President speaks for Taiwan *vis-à-vis* China and globally. The President symbolizes Taiwanese democracy to be defended.



Image: President Tsai Ing-wen, Vice President Lai Ching-te, and other leaders attend Tsai's second inauguration in 2020. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Current comments about Taiwan's defense emphasize not only asymmetric warfare but also resiliency and whole-of-society efforts. Three reasons already compel Taiwan to settle succession with urgency, which is in its unilateral power to resolve without foreign cooperation.

"Hostage Diplomacy"

First, China has an egregious record of taking hostages as part of its malign targeting against other governments. In April 2001, after a collision over the South China Sea between a [US Navy EP-3](#) reconnaissance plane and a People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy F-8 fighter, China held for 11 days the 24 US naval personnel who survived an emergency landing on Hainan Island. In a more recent example, Canada suffered China's "[hostage diplomacy](#)." Taiwan's military trained to secure its national command during the Han Kuang exercise (漢光演習) in July 2020. Special forces drilled

in a rescue of leaders [held hostage](#) by invaders.

Serious Incidents

Second, Taiwan has experienced what seem like movie plots but were serious incidents in presidential security. On March 19, 2004, on the very eve of an election, an assailant shot and injured both President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and Vice President Annette Lu (呂秀蓮), while they [campaigning in a jeep](#) in Tainan. In another example, on August 18, 2017, on the day that this author visited the Presidential Office Building with President Tsai inside, an assailant slashed a military guard with a [samurai sword](#) at an entrance, but other military police did not shoot him.

Reuters reported in December 2021 that China's espionage operations [penetrated the security unit](#) that protected President Tsai. A retired presidential security officer and a serving military police lieutenant colonel in the unit had their convictions upheld last year for leaking sensitive information about Tsai's security to one of China's intelligence agencies.

Military Warnings

Third, Taiwan knows about warnings concerning threats against its leadership. Last November, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) issued its latest National Defense Report of 2021. MND warned that all of the PLA's ballistic, cruise, and air-launched land-attack missiles plus the weapons of the PLA Navy and PLA Air Force could attack euphemistically-called "[high-value targets](#)" in Taiwan's government, economy, and military as well as "decimate" its operations.

The US Department of Defense's latest [report to Congress](#) on China's military power warned in November 2021 that the PLA prepares to threaten Taiwan's leadership in various ways. The PLA will attempt to isolate Taiwan's authorities and people, and to control the narrative of the conflict. Another effort will undercut the perceived effectiveness or legitimacy of Taiwan's government.

The Pentagon also warned that:

1. "Such a campaign could include computer network or limited kinetic attacks against Taiwan's political, military, and economic infrastructure to induce fear in Taiwan and degrade the Taiwan population's

confidence in their leaders."

2. "Similarly, PLA special operations forces (SOF) could infiltrate Taiwan and conduct attacks against infrastructure or leadership targets."
3. "The PRC could use missile attacks and precision air strikes against air defense systems, including air bases, radar sites, missiles, space assets, and communications facilities to degrade Taiwan's defenses, neutralize Taiwan's leadership, or break the Taiwan people's resolve."

Recommendations for Resiliency

- (1) As the first of five recommendations, Taiwan needs to consider and establish a clear, credible, careful, and constitutionally-based plan for legal presidential succession that is communicated to the Taiwanese people in peacetime, before critical contingencies occur in a crisis or conflict.

The ROC Constitution has limited stipulations for only a few successors to the president, but this author believes that Taiwan has a protocol list with the following longer line of succession.

1. President, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文)
2. Vice President, Lai Ching-te (賴清德)
3. President of the Executive Yuan, Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌)
4. President of the Legislative Yuan, Speaker You Si-kun (游錫堃)
5. President of the Judicial Yuan, Hsu Tzong-li (許宗力)
6. President of the Examination Yuan, Huang Jong-tsun (黃榮村)
7. President of the Control Yuan, Chen Chu (陳菊)
8. Secretary-General of the Office of the President (OP), David Lee (李大維)
9. Secretary-General of the National Security Council (NSC), Wellington Koo (顧立雄)
10. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Joseph Wu (吳釗燮)
11. Minister of National Defense, Chiu Kuo-cheng (邱國正)

12. Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Chiu Tai-san (邱太三)

Such an assumed succession list raises some questions.

1. Is this list correct about the plan of succession? What are its legal bases?
2. Is this succession optimal or appropriate, especially in a conflict? For example, would the Minister of Defense be more qualified than the President of the Examination Yuan?
3. If Premier Su is killed, is incapacitated, is missing, or resigns while exercising presidential power, would Vice Premier Shen Jong-chin (沈榮津) then assume the power as the new premier or would it then transfer to the next official on the list (Speaker You)?
4. How useful are the ROC's Constitution and laws in determining presidential succession? For example, what if the presidential position is not "vacant," but the president is somehow out of communication or unable to discharge the powers and duties of the ROC's presidential office?
5. How should this succession be included in current efforts to amend the Constitution? The time to clarify presidential power is now, not during a crisis. Taiwan can be proactive.

In a crisis or conflict, the Taiwanese people as well as Washington, Tokyo, and other capitals will need answers to additional critical questions, such as the following.

1. Who is Taiwan's national authority to command the military?
2. What is the contingency in case of attacks that harm this command authority?
3. What is the impact of attacks against leaders on critical command and communications?
4. Where will the leadership be kept safe, be dispersed, and still command and govern?

In contrast, on November 19, 2021, President Joe Biden informed Senator Patrick Leahy, President Pro Tempore, of a temporary [transfer of power](#) to Vice President Kamala Harris. That event was news-worthy only be-

cause she became the first female US Acting President.

(2) Taiwan needs to prepare for contingencies in a whole-of-government approach, just as it deals successfully with the COVID-19 pandemic. Taiwan could improve traditionally weak inter-agency coordination and ensure clear plans to preserve or restore the continuity of government (COG). Such plans for continuity of operations (COOP) would ensure the continuation of essential functions during a crisis or conflict that will disrupt normal operations.

(3) Taiwan needs to establish procedures to prevent all leaders who may have national authority from being in the same location at the same time. When the US President goes to Congress to address the State of the Union, the Vice President and Speaker of the House sit behind the President. The House chamber also hosts all Members of the House and Senate, Supreme Court justices, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Cabinet officials—except for one. One secretary always stays away to survive in a separate location just in case all others are killed.

(4) Taiwan needs to set up a Joint SOF Command (聯合特戰指揮部). One of its select missions could be to strengthen leadership security, including any necessary recapture or rescue of command centers, government offices, and top leaders. US SOF could cooperate in training.

(5) Taiwan also might request US assistance in requirements related to presidential succession, while that is the responsibility of DPP and KMT leaders. For example, the Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) could cooperate with MND on COG and COOP.

The main point: Taiwan needs to boost resilience by proactively clarifying its presidential succession. The Taiwanese people should accept this plan before any crisis or conflict occurs.

Democracy vs. "Democracy": A Turbulent 2022 in the Taiwan Strait

By: Michael Mazza

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terprise Institute, and a non-resident fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

The year 2022 could be the 21st century's most turbulent year yet for cross-Strait relations. Although China's employment of coercive tactics has become the rule rather than the exception in recent years, the political calendars in Taiwan and China intersect in ways that may be conducive to even greater tensions in the months ahead.

A Quiet Start

Before cross-Strait waters turn choppy, however, they may experience a relatively quiet start to the year. The 2022 Winter Olympics kick off during the first week of February and with those games already drawing extra unwanted attention to Chinese human rights abuses, Beijing may be intent on not providing critics additional ammunition with which to assail China's hosting duties. The [Olympic Truce](#) kicks in on January 28 and, especially with Taiwanese athletes competing in a number of events, Beijing may want to at least give the appearance of respecting it. That likely will not entail a complete cessation of flights into Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ), but large exercises may be put off until after the Paralympics, which close on March 13 (technically, the Olympic Truce ends a week later, on March 20).

The 20th Party Congress

With the Olympics in the rearview mirror, Xi Jinping (習近平) will set his sights squarely on the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (NCCCCP, 中國共產黨全國代表大會), which is traditionally held in the fall. The 20th Party Congress should have kicked off a leadership transition following Xi's decade in power. But March 11 will instead mark the three-year anniversary of an amendment to the People's Republic of China (PRC) Constitution that abolished presidential term limits. There is now no legal bar to Xi remaining as president, there is no apparent successor for general secretary, and Xi has given no indication he plans to step aside.

Although odds are that Xi will remain general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), chairman of the Central Military Commission (中央軍事委員會), and president of the PRC, the path to that outcome may not be entirely smooth sailing. Indeed, it has been

decades since a Chinese leader attempted the feat. Xi has certainly broken recent norms in centralizing power and building for himself a cult of personality, but he may not have abolished those norms. Xi is a product of the CCP, but so are those cadres that still favor relatively more openness, rule by consensus, and institutionalized leadership transitions. There is not significant open resistance to Xi's continuing rule, but the upcoming Party Congress presents a rare opportunity for an opposition to organize and operate within Party confines and employ Party procedures to foil his plans.

Does that remain unlikely? Yes. But Xi will not take any chances. 2022 will be yet another tragic year for human rights in China, with even less space for civil society, greater controls on speech, and the Party's ever greater dominance of the information space within Chinese borders. The Party will use that dominance not only to shut down and drown out speech it does not like, but also to make a positive case for Xi's continuing grip on the helm. As propaganda outlets lecture audiences on the Chinese leader's success in delivering his promised great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Xi will stay the course on Taiwan; to do otherwise would be to admit his approach to pursuing unification was failing. The years-long pressure campaign, then, will continue apace and could get worse. After all, going soft on Taiwan is not a political winner in Beijing.

Taiwan's Nine-In-One Elections

Unfortunately, Xi Jinping may also see an opportunity to make progress in 2022 in China's quest for unification. In November, Taiwan will hold its quadrennial "nine-in-one" [elections](#)—local contests for roles ranging from village chiefs to county magistrates. Akin to American midterms in their political significance, they serve as a gauge of popular support (or lack thereof) for the current national government and help set the terms on which the next presidential election will be fought two years later. It is little wonder, then, that China has acted aggressively to interfere in such elections in the past—particularly in [2018](#)—and that it is likely to do so again.

For all the talk of a growing Chinese invasion threat—a threat that has grown more [urgent](#), though not yet imminent—Beijing would still prefer to annex Taiwan without firing a shot. Doing so requires political lead-

ership in Taiwan that might be amenable to settling the cross-strait dispute on terms acceptable to Beijing; or that would be more likely to respond to nonviolent coercion in ways that China would find favorable. Taiwan's national leadership will not change in 2022, but "friendly" local leaders could make for local conditions more conducive to CCP united front work. Moreover, the defeat of candidates broadly aligned with current president Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨), whom Beijing considers to be [pro-independence](#), would mark a setback for her domestic agenda and help ensure that the DPP's candidate for president in 2024 will face an uphill battle. From Beijing's point of view, then, the upcoming nine-in-one elections may provide the CCP with an opportunity to shape Taiwan's domestic political landscape in such a way as to make non-violent unification more likely.

But that will be only one reason to interfere in Taiwan's 2022 elections. Even if the CCP has only limited (if any) success in supporting its preferred candidates, election interference can still undermine faith in Taiwan's democratic institutions. Disinformation campaigns, rumored instances of interference, and even successfully identified and frustrated cases of CCP meddling can all contribute to perceptions that the integrity of Taiwan's electoral processes has been weakened. Over time, those perceptions can contribute to internal divisions in Taiwan, decreased political engagement among the populace, and crises of legitimacy for the elected, ruling authorities. Such an outcome could likewise ease Beijing's quest for unification, as Taiwan's government will find policymaking far more difficult, especially regarding contentious issues—such as how to engage with, deter, and defend against China—and as Taiwanese society may find it difficult to unite in the face of Chinese coercion.

Finally, and related, the CCP may see added incentive to interfere in Taiwan's 2022 elections because of their temporal proximity to the 20th Party Congress. It has become clear in recent months that China is remarkably [sensitive to the suggestion that it is not a democracy](#). Ahead of the Biden Administration's early December Summit for Democracy, to which China was not invited, the Russian and Chinese ambassadors to the United States published a joint [op-ed](#) declaring that their

countries are, in fact, democracies. Building on this, China's State Council published an entire [white paper](#) on the topic: "China: Democracy That Works." Come the fourth quarter of 2022, Taiwan's actual democratic process and China's so-called democratic process will be on display for all to see—and for all to compare. The CCP will seek to shape that comparison. A likely message for CCP propaganda this coming autumn will be that the Party Congress is proof of China's orderly system, whereas the nine-in-one elections demonstrate the messiness and chaos inherent in liberal forms of governance. If the CCP can take steps to create that chaos, it will do so.

A Turbulent Year

What will hopefully be a relatively quiet start to 2022 in the Taiwan Strait will likely give way to rough seas as Xi Jinping looks ahead to major political events that will close out the year in both China and Taiwan. Optimistically, it is possible that Beijing will reduce military activities near Taiwan in the lead-up to Taiwan's elections, as it has [done in the past](#), in an effort to undercut China-skeptical candidates. But it is not clear that Beijing adheres to such logic any longer, especially given Taiwan's centrality in Xi's animating vision (the "[great rejuvenation](#)"), or that such efforts are likely to be effective anyway given the effect that the lengthy period of sustained pressure on Taiwan has had on that country's populace and politics.

Perhaps more likely is sustained and even intensified People's Liberation Army intimidation operations. China, meanwhile, will continue to seek Taiwan's isolation in the international arena. With the impending Party Congress, Beijing will mount particularly robust responses to calls for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations and may aim to pull more of Taiwan's formal diplomatic partners into China's orbit ([Central American](#) countries are of particular [concern](#)). It is also possible that China will resort to greater use of its economic leverage *vis-à-vis* Taiwan, while making implicit assurances that the election of more China-friendly candidates will see such measures suspended. On top of all that will come active interference in Taiwan's domestic politics, which will amount to a direct attack on Taiwan's sovereignty and on one of modern Taiwan's defining features.

The Tsai Ing-wen government faces a tall task in 2022. It must effectively defend Taiwan against various Chinese depredations, maintain societal unity to the greatest extent possible during an election year, and ensure that in standing up for itself, it will not be perceived as provoking Beijing or otherwise contributing to cross-Strait tensions. And Taiwan's government must do all of that while continuing to grapple with COVID-19 and the pandemic's various follow-on effects.

Better buckle up, because 2022 could be quite the ride.

The main point: The 2022 political calendars in Taiwan and China intersect in ways that may be conducive to heightened tensions.