

**Beijing's Reactions to Lai Ching-te's Position on Taiwan Sovereignty****John Dotson****From Vilnius to Asunción: How Japan is Subtly Amplifying Taiwan's Global Standing****Bryce C. Barros****A Plan B for PRC Cable-Cutting: Taiwan's Satellite Communications****Diarra Molock****Lessons for India: How Taiwan Handles Chinese Political Warfare****Eerishika Pankaj****How Can US Forces Korea Help Deter Both North Korea and China?****Benjamin Sando****Takeaways from the 2025 G7 Summit and Opportunities for Taiwan****Adrienne Wu and Trinity Tai****Beijing's Reactions to Lai Ching-te's Position on Taiwan Sovereignty**

By: John Dotson

*John Dotson is the director of the Global Taiwan Institute and the editor-in-chief of the Global Taiwan Brief.****The Controversy Over Legislative Recalls and Lai Ching-te's Speeches on Sovereignty***

Taiwan's politics, sharply polarized at the best of times, have been particularly contentious entering the summer months of this year. Taiwan's January 2024 elections produced a divided government, with Lai Ching-te (賴清德) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨) winning the presidency; and a coalition of the Kuomintang (KMT, 中國國民黨) and the Taiwan's People's Party (TPP, 台灣民眾黨) taking a majority of the seats in the Legislative Yuan (立法院). Following serious controversies in 2024 over matters such as the government budget, legislative authority, and the role of the constitutional court (*see analysis [here](#) and [here](#)*), civic activists upset over the actions of the majority legislative caucus organized recall efforts against a large number of KMT legislators.

As of the end of June, 24 KMT legislators now face [first-stage recall elections](#) (for potential removal from office) scheduled for July 26. (Possible recall elections for two DPP legislators are pending.) As the recall elections approach, both sides of Taiwan's Green/Blue divide have been seeking to [mobilize excitement and engagement amongst their supporters](#). The KMT has [called on its supporters](#) to "safeguard Taiwan's democratic institutions" by defeating the recall efforts—while further decrying in histrionic language the "[Green Communism](#)" (綠共) it claims is embodied in "the creeping authoritarianism of President Lai Ching-te and the [DPP]."

For his part, in late June President Lai Ching-te commenced a series of speeches promoted as "[Ten Talks on Uniting the Country](#)" (團結國家十講). The first of these speeches—which was delivered before a Rotary Club International chapter in New Taipei City on June 22—might be viewed either as a follow-up to Lai's March 13 speech on countering hostile Chinese subversion (*see analysis [here](#)*), or as a form of indirect campaigning for the recalls (or perhaps, as some combination of the two).

In the June 22 speech, Lai offered a full-throated [assertion of Taiwan's sovereignty](#), while still keeping within the framework of Taiwan's official statehood identity as the Republic of China (ROC). Lai pointedly asserted that the ROC and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are "not subordinate to one another" (互不隸屬). Lai asserted that: "The Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), Taiwan, these are all the names of our country... these all are our names, and all are equally

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resonant! Regardless of what name we use to call ourselves, we are an independent and sovereign country!” (“中華民國，中華民國台灣，台灣，都是我們的國家... 都是我們國家的名字，都一樣響亮啊！無論用哪個名字稱呼我們，我們都是獨立自主的國家啦!”)



Image: ROC President Lai Ching-te delivering a speech on the theme of “Uniting and Protecting Our Country” before an audience in New Taipei City (June 22). (Source: [ROC Overseas Community Affairs Council](#))

### Beijing’s Reactions and the Continuing Denial of Taiwan’s Sovereignty

#### The June 24 People’s Daily Editorial

The reaction of Beijing to Lai’s speech was as swift as it was predictable. On June 24, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s official mouthpiece *People’s Daily* (人民日報) responded with a commentary (under the official pseudonym “Zhong Yiping” [钟一平]) titled [“Lai Ching-te Falsifies History, Distorts Facts, and Inevitably Courts Self-Destruction”](#) (赖清德篡改历史、歪曲事实，必将自取灭亡). The editorial repeated the CCP’s consistent assertion that China’s sovereignty over Taiwan is a universally accepted fact: “Taiwan from ancient times has belonged to China, history is clear, [and] legal facts are clear; the One China Principle [一个中国原则] is the international consensus, deeply understood by everyone, completely without dispute.”

The editorial further declared that Lai’s speech “broadly spread ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist speech, pushing out the ‘New Two States Theory’ [‘新两国论’]. This speech was full of various factual falsehoods, historical errors, false reasoning and heresy [邪说]; the provocation was strong [and] the harm was great, it was a ‘Taiwan independence’ declaration that nakedly incited cross-Straits antagonism” (是一篇赤裸裸煽动两岸对立对抗的“台独”宣言).

Perhaps most striking of all was the way that the ed-

itorial zeroed in on Lai himself in highly personal and pejorative terms. Per the commentary, Lai’s speech “once again demonstrated Lai Ching-te’s ignorance and insanity (无知与疯狂), it revealed again his thick-headed and unchanging ‘Taiwan independence’ nature and repulsive countenance, [and] confirmed him as a ‘troublemaker’, ‘peril maker’, [and] ‘war maker’ (‘麻烦制造者’ ‘危险制造者’ ‘战争制造者’).” The editorial warned that “Lai Ching-te vainly attempts to mislead thinking [and] to manufacture opposition—this is [Lai] talking to himself, caught up in narcissism, [which will] eventually bring disgrace upon himself and invite his own self-destruction (终究是自取其辱、自取灭亡).”

Such highly personal invective is consistent with a larger, ongoing effort to vilify Lai on a personal level—as was seen in the early April [Strait Thunder-2025A exercise](#), during which the CCP propaganda system released material depicting Lai as a venomous parasitical insect. The tone of such propaganda goes beyond the level of vilification that was directed at former DPP President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), and appears to reflect the further hardening of the CCP’s narratives towards the DPP and its leadership.



Image: The People’s Daily editorial of June 24—issued in response to Lai Ching-te’s June 22 speech on Taiwan’s sovereignty—which labeled Taiwan’s president as a “troublemaker, peril maker, [and] war maker” (“麻烦制造者” “危险制造者” “战争制造者”). (Image source: [People’s Daily](#))

#### The May 2025 White Paper on China’s National Security

The harsh language of the *People’s Daily* editorial—while particularly strident—is consistent with both long-standing and rigid CCP positions towards Taiwan, as well as a pattern of escalating rhetoric towards the Lai Administration. [1] In another recent example of such discourse, on May 12 the PRC State Council Information Office (the alter ego of the CCP Central Propaganda Department) published [China’s National Secu-](#)

[rity in the New Era \(新时代的中国国家安全\)](#), a white paper that presented the CCP's official perspectives on the intertwined issues (as seen by the party) of sovereignty and national security.

Aside from the issue of internal regime security (always the preeminent concern of the party), the white paper reveals again the regime's preoccupations with "Taiwan independence forces"—which are aided and abetted by sinister "Western anti-China forces" lurking in the background. Taiwan features as a prominent topic in the white paper: Section (5)(2) of the document lists the "Taiwan problem" as one of the "four red lines that are not subject to challenge"—alongside "democracy and human rights," "the path of our system" [e.g., *continued CCP rule*], and "development rights" (台湾问题、民主人权、道路制度、发展权利的4条红线不容挑战).

As stated in Section (1)(3) of the white paper:

*External pressure on national security is increasing. Western anti-China forces seek, by all means, to encircle, pressure, and constrain (围堵, 打压, 遏制) China; [and they] direct Westernization, dissolution strategies, infiltration, and sabotage activities (对中国实施西化, 分化战略, 进行渗透, 破坏活动) towards China. [...] Certain countries crudely interfere with China's internal affairs: causing trouble and agitation in the Taiwan Strait, South China Sea, and East China Sea; [and] interfering in Xinjiang, interfering in Tibet, interfering in Hong Kong, etc. again and again. Some foreign forces incessantly scheme to play the "Taiwan card" ("台湾牌"), [and] "Taiwan independence" forces ("台独"势力) obstinately insist on a separatist position, provoking risks.*

Section (3)(4) of the white paper is the part that reiterates the CCP's policies towards Taiwan—including its rigid insistence that Taiwan is a province of the PRC and subject to Beijing's authority, with no rightful sovereignty of its own. The document states that:

*[We must] resolutely advance national security unification. Persist in the One China Principle and "92 Consensus," and implement the Chinese Communist Party's Comprehensive Plan for Resolving the Taiwan Problem in the New Era. [2] [Regarding] basic Taiwan policy, [we must] promote the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations [and] integrated development, draw the cord tight on cross-Straits feelings (拉紧两岸情感纽带) and mutual benefit, [and] deeply*

*plant a foundation for national unification. Unite the broad mass of Taiwan compatriots, firmly support patriotic unification forces within the island, strengthen cross-Straits dialogue and democratic consultation (民主协商), mutually discuss great matters of unification, [and] mutually collaborate on the great cause of unification. [3]*

This section goes on to further state that:

*[We must] resolutely oppose the "position that Taiwan's status is unresolved," [for] the legal effect of U.N. Resolution 2758 is unquestionable. [4] Taiwan is a province of China, [and] there is no basis, reason, or right for it to join the United Nations or other international organizations that only sovereign states can join. Resolutely oppose "Taiwan independence" separatism and the interference of foreign forces; on the basis of law, strike at "Taiwan independence" diehards ("台独"顽固分子), [and] powerfully frighten "Taiwan independence" separatist forces (有力震慑"台独"分裂势力). From start to finish, China will strive for peaceful unification with the greatest sincerity and effort—but will never renounce the use of armed force, [and] will continue to exercise the option for all necessary measures.*

The reassertion of the PRC position regarding U.N. Resolution 2758—which the PRC falsely insists conveys UN recognition of PRC sovereignty over Taiwan—has been advanced by the CCP propaganda system with [renewed emphasis in spring 2025](#). The assertion of the need to "powerfully frighten 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces" is also noteworthy, and possibly portends more direct and aggressive actions directed at Taiwan's political leaders—as with the [alleged plot to crash a car into the motorcade of Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim](#) during a visit to Prague in March 2024.

## Conclusions

The dueling cross-Straits narratives over Taiwan's sovereignty status, which are thorny at the best of times, became even more heated in the months of May and June. Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te appears to be motivated by both sincere belief and political calculation in more actively asserting Taiwan's sovereign and independent status—while leaving some ambiguity as to whether that means Taiwan as "Taiwan," or as the "Republic of China." On this point, Lai's position is largely consistent with that of his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen: Tsai similarly asserted that Taiwan was an independent country not subject to PRC sovereignty, while adhering to the formal state identity and constitutional

framework of the ROC. In this, Lai's position is not a departure—but he has been more assertive than Tsai in pressing that position forward.

Beijing, for its part, has grown increasingly strident, in terms of both its ownership claims over Taiwan and in its personal vilification of Lai. With some prominent exceptions—often focused on scurrilous internet disinformation stories around election times—the CCP propaganda system often seemed satisfied to belittle Tsai by ignoring her, and by focusing on engagement with other Taiwanese figures who could be lured into the orbit of its united front system. By contrast, Lai's more proactive stance—no doubt motivated in part by the desire to spur public engagement for the July recall elections—has clearly struck a chord that the CCP leadership feels it cannot ignore. However, Beijing's harsh and vituperative reaction will win it few friends in Taiwan—and is likely to further perpetuate the estrangement of Taiwan's people from their menacing authoritarian neighbor across the Taiwan Strait.

**The main point:** Speeches made by Taiwan President Lai Ching-te in late June, which asserted Taiwan's sovereignty and independence in bolder language than before, touched off a harsh reaction from Beijing. The dueling narratives between Taipei and Beijing have further strained already tense cross-Strait relations, and neither side is likely to compromise on what it identifies as core concerns of national sovereignty.

[1] For a more detailed discussion of the CCP's official narratives regarding Taiwan, see: John Dotson,

*The Chinese Communist Party's Ideological Frameworks for Taiwan Policy*, Global Taiwan Institute (August 2024), [https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/OR\\_CCP-Ideological-Frameworks-for-TW-Policy.pdf](https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/OR_CCP-Ideological-Frameworks-for-TW-Policy.pdf).

[2] For an analysis of this “plan” and its component elements, see: John Dotson, “What Is the CCP's ‘Comprehensive Plan for Resolving the Taiwan Problem’?” *Global Taiwan Brief* (Feb. 9, 2022),

<https://globaltaiwan.org/2022/02/what-is-the-ccps-comprehensive-plan-for-resolving-the-taiwan-problem/>.

[3] The language of this sentence includes coded language that is significant in the context of the CCP's discourse on united front work. “Patriotic unification forces” (爱国统一力量) are persons willing to act on behalf

of CCP goals; while “democratic consultation” (民主协商) is code for engagement with the CCP united front bureaucracy.

[4] The PRC consistently (and falsely) advances the position that U.N. Resolution 2758, passed in 1971, conveys U.N. recognition of PRC sovereignty over Taiwan. For discussion of this, see: Russell Hsiao, “Resolution 2758 and the Fallacy of Beijing's UN ‘One-China Principle’,” *Global Taiwan Brief* (Oct. 20, 2021), <https://globaltaiwan.org/2021/10/resolution-2758-and-the-fallacy-of-beijings-un-one-china-principle/>; and John Dotson, *The Chinese Communist Party's Ideological Frameworks for Taiwan Policy*, Global Taiwan Institute (August 2024), pp. 3-5, [https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/OR\\_CCP-Ideological-Frameworks-for-TW-Policy.pdf](https://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/OR_CCP-Ideological-Frameworks-for-TW-Policy.pdf).

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## From Vilnius to Asunción: How Japan is Subtly Amplifying Taiwan's Global Standing

By: Bryce C. Barros

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### Introduction

On a mid-May evening in Tokyo, Paraguayan President Santiago Peña Palacios addressed a [gathering](#) of representatives, lawmakers, and diplomats from countries without formal diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan). Beside President Peña stood Representative Lee I-yang (李逸洋), Taiwan's *de facto* ambassador to Japan. The two were addressing a trilateral “friendship reception” co-hosted by the Paraguayan Embassy and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan. “Paraguay stands proudly as a bridge between Japan and Taiwan,” President Peña declared, affirming the small landlocked South American country's role as a connector between Taiwan and countries outside Taipei's formal diplomatic circle. Representative Lee responded by thanking Asunción for Paraguay's enduring support.

The reception suggests a broader pattern of Taiwan-focused diplomatic coordination hosted by Japan. That same week, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba

[welcomed](#) President Peña for a two-way meeting. The meeting concluded with a signed memorandum of cooperation, a nod to the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific,” and an upgrade in Japan-Paraguay ties to that of “strategic partnership.”

The timing and symbolism of the two meetings were unmistakable and underscore Tokyo’s growing role in reinforcing Taiwan’s global standing.

### ***Japan’s Diplomatic Alignment with Taiwan***

Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, Japan’s foreign policy—first under the leadership of Fumio Kishida and now under Ishiba—has steadily aligned with that of Taiwan. For Japan, reinforcing Taiwan’s diplomatic space also serves its broader interest in maintaining a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific, without directly provoking Beijing. Tokyo has helped expand Taiwan’s growing influence in Central and Eastern Europe and advanced Taipei’s ties with its few remaining formal diplomatic allies, including Paraguay.

In contrast to China’s overly-ambitious and ultimately abortive [17+1 framework](#) in Central and Eastern Europe, Japan has earned trust by consistently delivering on diplomatic and economic commitments. Following his summit with Prime Minister Ishiba, President Peña [suggested](#) that Paraguay could serve as a venue for future engagement between Taiwan and other global leaders. Japan’s willingness to diplomatically elevate Taiwan creates space for its partners to confidently offer visible and creative support to Taipei. Thus, Japan’s efforts stand out as some of the most consequential in supporting Taiwan’s diplomatic relations, especially as Beijing seeks to isolate Taipei by poaching its [remaining](#) 12 diplomatic allies.

Japan’s diplomatic alignment with Taiwan has been particularly evident in Central and Eastern Europe. Tokyo’s efforts build on the groundwork laid by Taipei, whose diplomatic corps has [actively cultivated](#) informal partnerships and technical cooperation across Eastern Europe and the Pacific. Catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war in Ukraine, countries such as [Lithuania](#), [Czechia](#), and [Poland](#) have emerged as key informal partners of Taiwan, including by opening a [representative office](#), strengthening economic and technological cooperation, [providing aid and assistance](#) to Ukraine, and [publicly challenging](#) Chinese pressure. Japan’s increasing diplomatic and economic [engagement](#) in the region complements Taiwan’s existing initiatives. Tokyo supports [supply chain resilience](#),

[energy security](#), and [closer cooperation](#) between the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions, particularly in relation to [Ukraine](#)—and all these initiatives align with Taiwan’s efforts.

### ***Strengthening Ties in Europe: Lithuania as a Case Study***

Further exemplifying Japan’s expanding diplomatic efforts in Central and Eastern Europe, Prime Minister Ishiba [met](#) with Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda in Tokyo on June 9, during the latter’s visit to the Osaka World Expo. During their meeting, both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” while deepening cooperation in areas where Taiwan maintains existing or emerging partnerships, such as Ukraine’s [reconstruction](#), [semiconductors](#), [infrastructure development](#), and cybersecurity. The decision by policymakers in Vilnius and Tokyo to collaboratively engage signals the ongoing convergence of foreign policies between like-minded democracies across the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions, with Taiwan serving as a critical catalyst.

After Vilnius permitted the opening of the [Taiwanese Representative Office](#) (駐立陶宛台灣代表處) in Lithuania—the first representative office in Europe to feature “Taiwanese” in its title, instead of the commonly-used “Taipei”—China lashed out against the small Baltic country with diplomatic and economic retaliation. The fallout from China’s coercion provided an [opportunity](#) for Lithuania to deepen diplomatic, trade, and other ties with like-minded countries across the Indo-Pacific. By quietly supporting Lithuania, Japan is bolstering the country’s resolve in the face of coercion from Beijing, strengthening relations between Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific democracies, and, most importantly, amplifying Taiwan’s international visibility. The meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Nausėda serves the interests of both countries and Taiwan by demonstrating the evolving partnerships between Taiwan, Lithuania, and Japan.

### ***Global Reinforcement Through the G7 and Beyond***

Japan’s role in bolstering Taiwan’s international profile reached a peak during Tokyo’s [presidency](#) of the G7 in 2023. Under Japanese leadership, G7 communiqués referred to Taiwan more consistently and with sharper diplomatic language than in previous years. The [April 2023 Foreign Ministers’ Communiqué](#), the [May Hiroshima Summit Leaders’ Communiqué](#), the [November Foreign Ministers’ Statement](#), and the [December Leaders’ Statement](#) described Taiwan Strait’s “peace and stability” as “indispensable” to the international

community’s “security and prosperity.” This phrasing hadn’t appeared in earlier G7 documents. Japanese officials also highlighted Taiwan’s strategic importance in a [meeting](#) between then-Prime Minister Kishida and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, as well as in bilateral meetings with other Euro-Atlantic leaders from [Lithuania](#), [France](#), the [United Kingdom](#), and [NATO](#).

While earlier G7 statements had acknowledged [Taiwan](#) and the importance of security in the Taiwan Strait for global stability, Japan’s presidency gave the issue greater visibility, more precise language, and stronger normative framing. Tokyo’s strategy remains constrained by its official adherence to its [One-China Policy](#), which recognizes the People’s Republic of China as the sole legal government of all of “China.” However, Tokyo merely “fully understands and respects” Beijing’s position that Taiwan is a part of China, which requires careful navigation to avoid escalation while still signaling support for Taipei. Through measured diplomatic coordination, Tokyo has helped build a multilateral consensus that bolstered Taiwan’s position without provoking confrontation.

While the recent meeting between Japan and Paraguay demonstrated Tokyo’s continued support for one of Taiwan’s remaining diplomatic allies in Latin America, Japan has been even more proactive in the South Pacific. In February 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba [met with](#) Palauan President Surangel Whipps Jr. to reaffirm the countries’ “special relationship” and to expand cooperation in areas where Taiwan [happens to be](#) deeply engaged: including maritime security, sustainable development, and regional infrastructural development. Japan’s [use](#) of official development assistance, infrastructure finance, and technical assistance has also enhanced its appeal as a development partner by [aligning closely](#) with Taiwan’s emphasis on transparent, sustainable, and capacity-building cooperation across the Indo-Pacific.

The following month, Japan [hosted](#) the Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine, with bilateral pledges to support [maritime domain awareness](#) as well as starting [talks](#) that led to the signing of a grant for airport improvements and fisheries development. Later that year, during the [10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting](#), Prime Minister Kishida [met](#) with Tuvalu’s Prime Minister, Feleti Penitala Teo, to discuss maritime transportation, cybersecurity, and climate change adaptation. Like Paraguay, each of these Pacific states [maintains diplomatic relations](#) with Taipei rather than Beijing.

## Conclusion

Japan’s engagement across Central and Eastern Europe, the G7, Latin America, and the South Pacific is more than parallel diplomacy—it serves as a replicable model for how middle powers can quietly reinforce Taiwan’s international space. By aligning with countries where Taiwan has made informal gains as well as Taipei’s remaining formal diplomatic allies, Japan has provided visibility, legitimacy, and development incentives without altering its position on cross-Strait relations. Tokyo and like-minded actors could extend this approach to other diplomatic allies of Taiwan whose commitment [may be wavering](#), such as Haiti, St. Lucia, and the Holy See, where even modest engagement would offer meaningful diplomatic ballast.

As Taiwan works to expand its global presence while fending off pressure from Beijing, Japan has emerged as its most quietly effective partner, reinforcing Taiwan’s successes and stabilizing its risks. Much like Paraguay’s “bridge,” Japan offers diplomatic scaffolding—subtle yet vital—that helps connect Taiwan to the world. In contrast, the United States provides explicit political and military support, which deters aggression and enhances Taiwan’s international profile. These distinct approaches are complementary: Tokyo’s low-key engagement in regions of strategic engagement importance to Taipei reduces friction while deepening practical ties, while Washington’s vocal backing signals resolve and rallies broader international support.

**The main point:** By aligning with like-minded democratic countries, thus strengthening the international community’s ties with Taiwan, Japan amplifies Taiwan’s global standing and fortifies democratic resilience across Central and Eastern Europe, the G7, Latin America, and the South Pacific.

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## A Plan B for PRC Cable-Cutting: Taiwan’s Satellite Communications

By: Diarra Molock

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Undersea cables lie on the seabed deep beneath the waves, making it difficult to detect network sabotage until after the fact. It is therefore easy for foreign governments, such as the People’s Republic of China (PRC), to argue that one of their nations’ vessels causing the severance of an undersea cable is an accident. In a recent case, the perpetrator cited an ‘accident’ as the reason for cutting an undersea cable around Taiwan for the fourth time this year. However, in a major shift regarding Taiwan’s national security, on June 12, a Chinese national—who was the captain of a To-

golese-registered vessel, Hong Tai 58 (宏泰58)—was sentenced to prison by Taiwanese authorities for severing the Taiwan-Penghu No.3 cable. For the first time, the Taiwanese government has taken serious action to heavily penalize someone who was responsible for endangering Taiwan’s undersea cables—hardware that is now designated by Taiwan’s Ministry of Digital Affairs (MoDA, 數位發展部) as “critical infrastructure.”



*Image: Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration escorts the Tongalese vessel suspected of dragging an anchor across the Taiwan-Penghu No. 3 cable back to Anping Port for investigation (February 25, 2025). (Image Source: [Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration](#))*

Undersea cables are cables laid deep along the ocean floor carrying internet and telecommunications traffic across large stretches of the ocean. Without them, there would be no global internet connectivity allowing people to make video calls and send text messages at a moment’s notice. On average, [150 to 200](#) undersea cables around the world are damaged each year, usually as a consequence of natural disasters such as earthquakes or fishing accidents. Taiwan is connected to 14 international [undersea cables](#) and 10 domestic cables. Additionally, Taiwan has experienced several major cable-cutting incidents over the past several years. In 2025 alone, there have already been [four recorded](#) cable cuts carried out by Chinese vessels: two due to [natural causes](#) and two due to suspected sabotage. These include the severance of the [Trans-Pacific Express](#), [Taiwan Matsu No. 2](#), and Taiwan Matsu No. 3 cables.

In response to these incidents, Taiwan has installed mitigation measures, such as [microwave backup systems](#)—a wireless alternative for reliable data transmission after a cable has been cut. While such developments are positive, the Taiwanese government knows that true communications resiliency will require a plan

B that is stronger than microwave backup systems. Unfortunately, microwave backup systems come with their [own set of problems](#): such as unclear lines of sight, which result in obstruction through ground terrain and interference from radio signals. In the case of a major contingency such as an invasion or blockade of the Taiwan Strait, the PRC is likely to engage in sabotage and cut some—if not all—of Taiwan’s undersea cables, throwing the nation’s government, military, and general population into digital darkness. Satellites are the only alternative to ensure Taiwan is not cut off from the rest of the world.

### **Satellites and the New Space Race**

As the 21st century space race has taken off, satellites have become vitally important. Despite the fact that satellite connectivity only accounts for one percent of all internet traffic, governments and private companies around the world are racing to launch satellites, particularly [low-earth orbit \(LEO\) satellites](#). While Space X’s impressive Starlink constellation of [nearly 8,000 satellites](#) spearheads the space frontier, Taiwan is developing its own version of Starlink, due to disputes with SpaceX over Taiwan’s [ownership laws](#), and national security concerns. Taiwan’s “[National Space Technology Long-term Development Program](#),” the third phase of a government initiative established since 1991, is advancing the nation’s indigenous satellites. In the 2019, the Executive Yuan (EY, 行政院) approved the current phase of this program, spanning until 2028, with a budget of NTD 25.1 billion (USD 848.6 million). Moreover, the EY intends to further extend the program’s timeline to 2031 and inject an additional budget of [NTD 40 billion](#) (USD 1.4 billion) into the program.

### **Satellites and Lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War**

The Russia-Ukraine war serves as a case study for how the Taiwanese government can better prepare its communications resilience during a conflict. The day before Russia invaded Ukraine, one of the first decisive attacks included a cyber attack on the [Viasat KA-SAT network](#)—knocking thousands of people off the internet, and illustrating how communications infrastructure are at immediate risk of attack during war time. Starlink, the world’s largest satellite constellation, provided free Starlink connection to allow Ukraine access to its [terminals](#). Connecting to the internet via Starlink, Ukrainian troops were able to communicate quickly and effectively, guiding [drones](#) to exact target locations with the ability to quickly reassess and pinpoint enemy locations. While Russian troops were able to disrupt traditional communication networks, Starlink enabled

the Ukrainian military to have access to reliable internet connectivity.

Compared to Ukraine, one of Taiwan's biggest disadvantages is its terrain. Starlink satellites use [Ku or Ka-band frequencies](#) which support higher rates of data. However, they also experience more atmospheric interference. In an interview with Karina Wugang, a researcher from the Institute of the Study of War, she shared that: "One ideally needs a clear line of sight to the sky to get a good signal. Tall buildings, trees, and mountains will affect connectivity, and Taiwan has all three. It's important to be cognizant that Taiwan's geography is not as ideal as Ukraine, which has mostly flat and open fields." [1] A constellation sufficient for Taiwan's communications resilience would require at least [120 satellites](#), a far cry from the six LEO-satellites that Taiwan currently plans for launch by 2029.

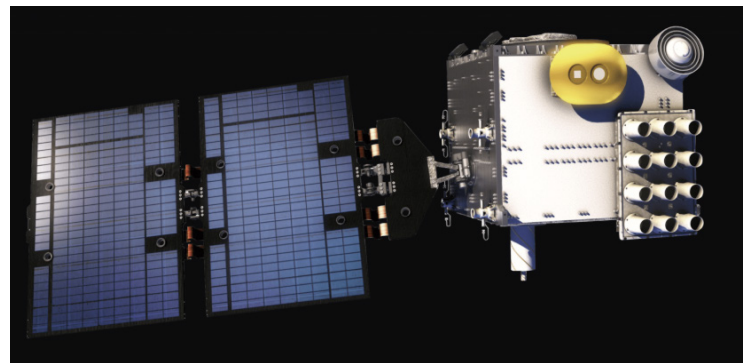
### **What About Anti-Satellite Weapons?**

Despite China's demonstration of its ability to destroy satellites via anti-satellite weapons (ASAT), due to limited territorial space in space and the destructive nature of direct attacks on satellites, [governments and private companies](#) are less likely to engage in actions that escalate wartime conflict in the space domain. There are two types of ASATs: [destructive ASATs](#), which are objects or weapons that can physically crash or destroy satellites, and [non-destructive ASATs](#), which include objects that are conducted from regular air space, ground stations, and low orbit and can disable satellites without collision. Governments are more likely to engage in less escalatory tactics using [non-destructive ASATs](#) such as jamming satellites, which broadcast radio frequency signals to overpower satellite signals or engage in cyber attacks. Most countries have yet to demonstrate [ASAT capabilities](#)—with the exception of the [United States](#), [Russia](#), [China](#), and [India](#)—and there has never been a war in which participants have employed ASATs. The United States is also spearheading a multilateral initiative to [ban destructive ASAT testing](#) in space, an effort that is gaining support from multiple governments and private aerospace companies. Such a prohibition may not be necessary. In a set of Taiwan invasion scenario [wargames](#) conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), both the United States and China refrained from engaging in satellite warfare due to the high risk of mutual communication failures.

### **Taiwan's Domestic Satellite Communications Program**

Unlike Ukraine, Taiwan's greatest current advantage is time. In line with the PRC's "One China Principle," the

PRC has continuously articulated a clear intention to "[reunify](#)" with what it believes is the breakaway province of Taiwan, by force if necessary. According to the US [Central Intelligence Agency](#), China's People's Liberation Army (PLA, 人民解放軍) is preparing to be ready for an invasion of Taiwan by 2027. As a result, the Taiwan Space Agency (TASA, 國家太空中心)—which is overseen by the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC, 國家科學及技術委員會)—is spearheading the "[Beyond 5G LEO Satellite Program](#)," a public-private partnership project with Taiwanese telecom companies to help develop six LEO satellites for Taiwan's domestic satellite communications system by 2029. The project plans to launch six LEO satellites that will offer a communications system similar to Starlink. The first two satellites (1A and 1B), which are designed to test and verify two-way communications between the satellites and ground stations, will be [deployed](#) and launched by 2026. The project also includes the development of Taiwan's [own launch rockets](#) and launch pads.



*Image: Taiwan Space Agency's image of the FORMOSAT-7 remote sensing satellites. (Image Source: [Taiwan Space Agency](#))*

Besides the planned LEO satellites, Taiwan's [FORMOSAT-5](#) and [FORMOSAT-7](#) remote sensing satellites currently support international and domestic disaster relief, as well as meteorology. Taiwan plans to expand these capacities by launching [FORMOSAT-8](#) optical sensing satellites starting in October of this year, as well as [FORMOSAT-9](#) synthetic aperture radar (SAR) satellites between 2027-2029. SAR satellites can make observations during the day and night time, regardless of weather. These satellites will include edge computing capabilities, which reduces latency and the bandwidth necessary for processing data in real-time. Essentially, [SAR satellites](#) can support Taiwan's defense posture in real-time battlefield intelligence to support military decision-making.

### **Taiwan's Foreign Partnerships**

Thus far, Taiwan is partnering with three major foreign satellite providers to enhance its communications resiliency. Taiwan's first commercial license for a LEO satellite, provided by the United Kingdom's Eutelsat Oneweb, has been approved and will be serviced by [Chunghwa Telecom](#) (Taiwan's leading telecommunications service provider). Taiwan has inked an additional deal with [Luxembourg's SES to provide medium earth orbit \(MEO\) satellites](#). Finally, Chunghwa Telecom has signed a contract with the US-based company [Astranis](#) to purchase a microGEO satellite—a smaller, more flexible, and less expensive version of geostationary satellites. The microGEO satellite launch is expected by the end of 2025, with bandwidth capability available by 2026. The Taiwanese government, via the NSTC, is also in talks with [Amazon's Kuiper](#), which has [approval](#) by the US Federal Communications Commission to launch 3,200 LEO satellites. Additionally, half of those satellites must be launched by July 2026. As of this year, Kuiper has currently launched [27 LEO satellites](#). If Kuiper can meet the July 2026 deadline to deploy half of its LEO satellites, a partnership with Amazon's Kuiper would significantly enhance Taiwan's efforts to fortify its communications resilience.

If projections are accurate and the PRC has the military readiness to invade Taiwan by 2027, Taiwan has less than two years to solidify its communications priorities. This is imperative, given that the Executive Yuan has reportedly instructed the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP, 國家科學技術委員科技辦公室) to write up a strategy for multiple government agencies to coordinate on Taiwan's satellite communications. Despite this, there has only been one such relevant meeting as of October 2024. [2] Taiwan is investing in strategies to enhance its communications resilience by fortifying its undersea cables, undersea cable backup systems and LEO satellites. This includes partnering with foreign satellite providers and developing its own domestic satellite system; however, this takes time and resources, making existing satellite networks like OneWeb and Kuiper critical in the interim.

### ***Policy Recommendations:***

In order to expedite the Taiwanese satellite program, the author suggests the following policies:

- Taiwan should continue to encourage partnerships with a diverse range of foreign-based communications and aerospace companies to provide Taiwan with payload capability, while Taiwan continues to build its own domestic components, such as radio frequency parts and power amplifiers.

- Taiwan should continue leveraging its own technology in the space industry supply chain, including semiconductors and its advancements in information and communications technology (ICT). Companies interested in developing products in a [microgravity environment](#), which are impossible to make on earth, are already meeting in Taiwan. Rupert Hammond-Chambers, president of the US-Taiwan Business Council emphasized that "Taiwan is in a position to replace some Chinese suppliers in the supply chain as US companies are trying to root out Chinese sourced sub systems." [3]
- The Executive Yuan should provide the OSTP, the government agency in charge of creating a strategic plan for Taiwan's satellite communications at the inter-agency level, a deadline to submit its strategy. The EY should also mandate monthly or quarterly meetings to ensure cooperation between all government agencies involved in Taiwan's satellite domain, including the National Communications Commission (NCC, 國家通訊傳播委員會), MoDA, TASA, and the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA, 經濟部).
- In its efforts to collaborate with non Starlink satellite companies, the Taiwanese government must prioritize negotiations with foreign companies that could grant Taiwan access to a large fleet of LEO satellites such as Amazon's Project Kuiper and Eutelsat's Oneweb for communications resilience—especially in the event of a military conflict across the Strait.

**The main point:** The PRC has continuously engaged in the probable sabotage of Taiwan's undersea cables, undermining Taiwan's national security and sovereignty. In order to counteract the probable severance of Taiwan's undersea cables by the PRC in the event of an invasion, Taipei has invested in satellite communications, which will play a crucial role in defensive military operations. However, there is still much that needs to be done.

[1] Author's interview with Institute for the Study of War's China Researcher Karina Wugang, June 5, 2025.

[2] Internal memo from the BowerGroup Asia, June 13, 2025.

[3] Author's interview with US-Taiwan Business Council President, Rupert Hammond-Chambers, June 30, 2025.

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## Lessons for India: How Taiwan Handles Chinese Political Warfare

By: Eerishika Pankaj

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Since the formal [adoption](#) of the “Three Warfares” (三戰) strategy by the Communist Party of China (CCP, 中國共產黨) and its Central Military Commission (CMC, 中央軍事委員會), the triad of public opinion, psychological, and legal warfare has served as cornerstones of China's approach to gray zone conflict. Owing to consistent practice, Beijing has almost mastered the art of hybrid warfare that Sun Tzu (孫子) [referred to in his treatise](#) as “breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.” While recent agreements between New Delhi and Beijing have temporarily eased tensions along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), India remains vulnerable to Chinese aggression in other critical areas and must rethink its defensive strategies beyond the immediate concerns of border security. Here, Taiwan's experience as an open, democratic society on the front lines of China's “Three Warfares” for nearly two decades offers valuable lessons.

### Shared Challenges from Beijing

Beijing's cognitive warfare against Taiwan—executed via cyber intrusions, disinformation, and pseudo-legal territorial claims—is increasingly mirrored in its India strategy. China's version of the “Three Warfares” strategy directed at India includes cyberattacks on energy infrastructure (some examples being in [Ladakh](#), [Mumbai](#) and [Telangana](#)), state-driven [disinformation](#)

on social media targeting national ethos, and Beijing's [pseudo-legal claims](#) over Indian land. During the 2020 Galwan Valley skirmish, Chinese public opinion, as [reported](#) by state-media and the Chinese [government](#), blamed India for the clash that led to calls for [boycotting](#) Chinese goods, downplayed Chinese casualties, and [spread disinformation](#). Psychological warfare was evident in leaked satellite imagery of People's Liberation Army (PLA, 中國人民解放軍) buildups on the India-China border and via releases of documentaries such as [Motherland Engraved](#), which was published on the military channel of state broadcaster CCTV via Weibo on the two-year anniversary of the clashes in 2023. Legal warfare tactics continue through China's [renaming of locations](#) in Arunachal Pradesh and issuing provocative maps.

In April 2022 a Chinese state-sponsored group [repeatedly probed](#) India's power-grid organizations (State Load Despatch Centres), using ShadowPad malware on at least seven occasions. In 2021, a China-linked unit (“[TAG-28](#)”) targeted Bennett Coleman & Co (India's largest media group, publisher of the *Times of India*) and India's Unique Identification (also known as “Aadhaar”) database. Chinese hackers exfiltrated media files and intelligence from these networks, reflecting China's interest in shaping narratives and gathering sensitive data. Similarly, a leaked intelligence report (from a PRC contractor [i-Soon](#)) describes how attackers [stole data](#) from India's Ministries of Finance, External Affairs and Home (Interior) Affairs, as well as state institutions like the pension fund Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), Air India, telecom operator Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and the private healthcare chain Apollo Hospitals.

These are not isolated acts—rather, they reflect a coherent doctrine. India's response, however, has remained largely reactive, siloed, and under-institutionalized, even though it faces this threat not just from China, but its “[iron brother](#)” Pakistan as well—and oftentimes together. In the aftermath of the April 2025 Pahalgam terrorist strike (and India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor), Islamabad mounted a [coordinated cyber-propaganda](#) offensive—reportedly aided by China—to distort the narrative. Media analysts [described](#) this phase as a “[parallel war](#)” in the digital domain, where deepfakes, doctored videos and false advisories inundated social media. Crucially, China's [state media](#) [joined](#) the fray, as China's strategic silence on the issue allowed outlets like *China Daily* and other channels to [republish unverified](#) claims to celebrate the superiority of Chinese [weapons used by Pakistan](#) like the J-10C fighter jet and HQ-9 air defence system. In effect, Chi-

nese networks amplified Pakistani misinformation and injected their own, aiming to undermine India's credibility and sow confusion. These incidents illustrate the hybrid nature of modern conflict: kinetic actions by Pakistan were followed by a cognitive offensive blending Chinese-aligned platforms and local proxies.

By drawing from Taiwan's decentralized, civic-minded, and tech-savvy model of resilience, India can protect its national interests and advance [India-Taiwan security cooperation](#) within the [confines of India's "One-China Policy."](#) Cybersecurity and disinformation countermeasures offer immediate, actionable areas for engagement to lay the groundwork for a robust, unofficial partnership. As New Delhi seeks to evolve a comprehensive strategy to confront China across cognitive domains, Taiwan offers a compelling model of layered, non-kinetic deterrence. Can India build a similar strategy—one that looks beyond border skirmishes to meet the full spectrum of Chinese aggression?

### ***Taiwan's Successful "Resilience as Deterrence"***

Taiwan exemplifies the logic of "[resilience as deterrence](#)"—wherein societal robustness, technological advantages, and decentralized adaptability serve to complicate adversarial coercion. Taiwan's remarkable resilience against Beijing's economic coercion and persistent military intimidation offers India a holistic, layered template for countering the full-spectrum pressures of Chinese hybrid aggression. Despite the PRC's efforts to marginalize Taiwan through trade restrictions and diplomatic isolation, Taipei has pursued a strategy of "[strategic hedging](#)"—diversifying trade partnerships while retaining linkages that afford leverage, especially through its [dominance](#) in advanced semiconductor production. This calibrated balance between autonomy and interdependence allows Taiwan to avoid dependency without full economic decoupling. The Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) [alone](#) wields strategic leverage that even China [cannot afford](#) to ignore. In contrast, India remains dependent on Chinese imports [for critical sectors](#) such as pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, and electric vehicles. New Delhi must develop similar economic insulation strategies.

India's current initiatives, such as the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI), the [China Plus One](#) strategy, and semiconductor manufacturing [incentives](#) have yet to produce visible returns. Delhi's economic deterrence must constitute a long-term, institutionalized strategy rather than a set of reactionary moves to geopolitical crises. In this respect, India-Taiwan [economic relations](#) offer massive untapped potential.

Facing China's [constant military intimidation](#), Taipei has concurrently adopted an [asymmetric balancing](#) posture that prioritizes agility, survivability, and cost-effective deterrence over conventional force parity—evident in its investment in coastal defense missile systems, drone warfare, and anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategies. The recent unveiling of Taiwan's [Hai Kun-class](#) indigenous submarine, designed to counter Chinese naval incursions, is a case in point. While India has begun investing in asymmetric warfare—such as deploying [swarm drones](#), enhancing electronic warfare [capabilities](#), and expanding its special forces' [operational readiness](#)—there is untapped potential for India-Taiwan collaboration in areas like drone technology, cyber deterrence, and cognitive warfare strategies, which can reinforce both states' resilience against Chinese gray zone tactics. For instance, a Chinese unit, "[RedFoxtrot](#)" (linked to military intelligence), is known to systematically target Indian defence and communications networks.

Hence, most importantly for India, it is Taiwan's cyber strategy that creates an adaptable resilience model. Through a mix of disinformation campaigns, diplomatic isolation, and economic coercion, Beijing consistently seeks to destabilize Taiwanese democracy and weaken public confidence. And yet, Taiwan has survived—and adapted. Its resilience stems from a multi-pronged response—rooted in [asymmetric defense](#), [cyber and cognitive security](#), [public education](#) with focus on media literacy against cognitive warfare, and international/regional partnerships. Taiwan's leadership has [treated](#) narrative defense as proactive competition: the ruling party actively crafts cross-platform content strategies and mobilizes both government agencies and grassroots volunteers to counter enemy propaganda. India urgently needs to acknowledge such resilience in Taiwan's current model and learn from it to respond to hybrid warfare tactics.

### ***India's Delayed Responses***

New Delhi has traditionally approached its China challenge through a conventional security lens, yet Beijing's India strategy now spans data infrastructures, public narratives, economic dependencies, and legal contestation in global fora. Taiwan's approach offers India an alternative model. The trajectory of Taiwan's partnerships with democratic actors in the areas of cybersecurity (e.g., the [CODE exercise](#) with the United States), intelligence-sharing (formidably developed under the director of the National Security Bureau [NSB, 國家安全局], [Tsai Ming-yen](#) [蔡明彥]), and national [resilience](#) highlights pathways that India can emulate. Indeed, India already maintains frameworks for these kinds of

partnerships, such as via the [Quad cybersecurity-partnership](#), [India-ASEAN](#) cyber policy dialogue, and cyber-focused [alignment](#) with Israel, the United States, Russia, and others. Domestically, however, while Taiwan's national curriculum may not translate easily to India's federal structure, state-level pilots—in innovation-driven states like Kerala or Delhi—could include joint programs with civil society organizations (CSOs), modelled after Taiwan's CSOs focusing on democracy. This approach would allow experimentation without national legislative overhaul.

Facing over [2.4 million cyberattacks](#) daily in 2024, Taipei responded by institutionalizing cyber threat intelligence-sharing with [partners](#) (notably the United States), passing the [Organization Act of the Administration for Cyber Security, Ministry of Digital Affairs](#) in 2022, planning a [joint cybersecurity center](#), and launching a [national cybersecurity strategy](#). In contrast, India's cybersecurity architecture remains fragmented due to the [absence](#) of a comprehensive national cybersecurity strategy. India does maintain the [National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre \(NCI-IPC\)](#) and the [Indian Computer Emergency Response Team \(CERT-In\)](#)—which together constitute the primary nodes of India's reactive and preventive cybersecurity machinery. However, their mandates remain disconnected, and legislative tools, like the [National Cybersecurity Policy of 2013](#) and the relatively broad provisions of the [Information Technology Act of 2000](#), are outdated. Though an Indian national cybersecurity strategy remains elusive, New Delhi could establish a specialized "Cognitive Security Task Force" under the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), inspired by Taiwan's centralized model. A standing inter-agency "Cognitive Security" cell could be created, linking cyber/intel branches (Military Intelligence, RAW/MEA, IB/MHA, etc.), the National Cyber Coordination Centre, and state cyber cells. This body would gather and analyze threat data (mirroring Taiwan's research unit), run joint drills, and disseminate guidance. Such institutionalized cognitive defenses—spanning ministries to state capitals—would harden India's social fabric. By following Taiwan's integrated model of cyber-information resilience (rather than siloed, *ad hoc* reactions), India can better deter coordinated Chinese/Pakistani info-war campaigns and preserve public confidence.

### ***A New Pathway for India-Taiwan Cooperation***

Beijing's disinformation campaigns have sought to erode domestic trust in Taiwan's government by manipulating social media narratives and polarizing domestic discourse. In response, Taiwan has institution-

alized real-time fact-checking and integrated media literacy into its education system, thus reinforcing societal resilience. India, facing similar challenges—particularly around elections and national security—has responded through initiatives like [Press Information Bureau \(PIB\) Fact Check](#)—that worked overtime during the recent Pahalgam-Operation Sindoor period—and [financial fraud](#) monitoring. Yet, the efforts remain embryonic. India should deepen its engagement with Taiwan's counter-disinformation practices through third-party democratic coalitions such as the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF)—a platform it [already accesses](#). Such triangulated fora enable silent policy transfer without formal bilateral relations. Sessions may cover rapid-response models, national security council-led coordination, and election protection mechanisms.

New Delhi's cyber-security partnership with Taiwan could strengthen deterrence while remaining within the bounds of plausible deniability. While formally adhering to its One-China Policy, India retains space for behind-the-scenes cooperation with Taiwan. Strategic ambiguity should be maintained, framing engagement in the language of digital democracy and rule-of-law governance. Positioning these efforts within broader narratives of democratic resilience protects India diplomatically while enabling substantive gains. Furthermore, Track II and academic collaborations provide low-visibility, high-impact avenues for policy transfer.

**The main point:** Taiwan's institutional responses to cognitive warfare—rooted in whole-of-society resilience, public education, and a forward-facing strategic outlook—offer critical lessons for India as it confronts similar challenges in safeguarding democratic integrity against authoritarian influence.

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## **How Can US Forces Korea Help Deter Both North Korea and China?**

By: Benjamin Sando

*Ben Sando is a research fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.*

As the People's Republic of China (PRC) grows more aggressive towards Taiwan, American security analysts are [increasingly exploring](#) the potential involvement of [US Forces Korea](#) (USFK)—the United States' military force in South Korea—in a cross-Strait war. Such a role would represent a major departure for the USFK's [traditional objective](#): deterring an invasion of South Korea

by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Elbridge Colby, the newly-confirmed United States Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, thrust this idea into the mainstream last year when he [argued that](#) USFK should not be “held hostage to dealing with the North Korean problem.” Rumors reached a fever pitch in March of this year when the *Washington Post* [re-reported on](#) an alleged Department of Defense internal memo that called upon the US military to prioritize the defense of Taiwan over other defense objectives.

There is no clarity as to what effect this guidance may have on USFK's force structure. Currently, this debate is characterized more by hearsay than fact. The USFK commander was recently [compelled to deny](#) a report that the Pentagon was planning a reduction of 4,500 personnel from USFK's 28,500-strong force. Meanwhile, the US Air Force (USAF) recently increased the number of F-16 fighter aircraft stationed in South Korea [by 78 percent](#), contradicting concerns regarding a troop withdrawal. Whether or not this strategy will culminate in a reduction or increase in USFK personnel, it is reasonable to assume that the Trump Administration will seek some kind of modification to USFK to increase its ability to deter a PRC invasion of Taiwan. The buzzword for this kind of USFK posture is “[strategic flexibility](#),” and prominent American scholars have [argued in favor of it](#). Some argue that USFK could pivot to a “[flexible expeditionary force](#)” that could flow off the peninsula towards Taiwan in the event of a cross-Straits conflict.

This potential USFK realignment comes at a highly inconvenient time for the Republic of Korea (ROK). Seoul, facing increasing provocations from Pyongyang and an [expanding](#) DPRK nuclear arsenal, is already undergoing a [crisis of faith](#) in the United States' security commitment. Since the North [established](#) a credible nuclear intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capacity, Seoul has had to grapple with the [unsettling question](#) of whether the United States would really risk a DPRK nuclear attack on major American cities in order to defend the ROK. Doubts about the US alliance are stoking [South Koreans' desire](#) for an indigenous nuclear program. Further anxiety about a USFK reorientation will only increase the likelihood that Seoul will pursue its own nuclear deterrent.

For two reasons, US debate regarding the strategic flexibility of USFK tends to lack nuance. Firstly, it treats the 28,500-strong force presence as capable of providing [man-for-man additions](#) to a Taiwan defense operation. In reality, only a small subset of USFK could provide use in combat roles around Taiwan. Secondly, it overlooks increasing recognition that a war between

the United States and China over Taiwan would [likely trigger](#) a conflict between North and South Korea. If a US operation to protect Taiwan does lead to war on the Korean Peninsula, USFK's ability to fight the DPRK will be needed more than ever.

Therefore, planning regarding strategic flexibility should aim to furnish USFK with the ability to truly offer a combat function against both the PRC and the DPRK, rather than against one or the other. Under this criteria, the Pentagon should reject proposals for a “[flexible expeditionary force](#)” concept for USFK, and instead develop a posture through which USFK can attack both PRC and DPRK targets from its position on the peninsula. This will require an investment in long-range fires, as well as fighter aircraft capable of reaching Taiwan without aerial refueling—neither of which USFK currently possesses.

### ***A Strategically Inflexible USFK***

The idea of “strategic flexibility” for USFK first reached prominence during the early stages of the United States' War on Terror. During the 2001 *Global Posture Review* process, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld [challenged](#) the Pentagon to establish a more flexible force posture for military deployments in allied countries. Then, Rumsfeld sought reinforcements for the Bush Administration's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Pentagon moved an [Army infantry brigade](#) of 3,600 soldiers from their garrisons in Korea to Iraq. The brigade never returned—and during the course of the initiative, USFK troop numbers fell from [37,000](#) to the current allotment of [28,500](#) (though in recent years, the on-the-ground personnel count of USFK has dwindled to around [26,000](#)). The repositioning was met with tangible—but [not overwhelming](#)—concern by South Korean leaders. In a [2006 agreement](#), Washington and Seoul agreed to establish regular senior-level dialogues through which the two sides could consult with each other regarding future force adjustments.

The force reposturing of the 2000s was indeed a play at “strategic flexibility,” in that the USFK's Army-dominated assets were useful in the land-based conflicts in the Middle East. As the Korea scholar Clint Work has noted, USFK [specializes in fighting](#) a land war—a ground-based DPRK invasion resembling that of the 1950-53 Korean War—and the [reception, staging, onward movement, and integration](#) (RSOI) of US and allied reinforcements to the peninsula from Japan. While USFK assets may have been useful in the Middle East land wars, the force is [ill-prepared](#) to contribute combat forces to a naval and air-based operation to defend Taiwan.

A more detailed look at the major components comprising USFK can illustrate this weakness:

- **Eighth Army** (approximately 16,000 soldiers). This Army unit represents the bulk of USFK personnel. Its [2nd Infantry Division](#) is the Eighth Army's major ground combat unit. The division consists of ROK-US combined personnel units, a field artillery brigade, a combat aviation brigade (helicopters), an ROK mechanized brigade, and others. Other Eighth Army units operate air and missile defense systems, such as the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) platform.
- **Seventh Air Force** (approximately 8,000 airmen): This Air Force component is second only to the Eighth Army in size. As of April 2025, its flying units are two "[super squadrons](#)" of F-16s, totaling 62 fighters total. Its A-10 aircraft are [due to be phased out](#) by 2025.
- **Commander, US Naval Forces Korea** (approximately 400 sailors): USFK's naval component is [responsible for](#) liaison between the US and ROK navies, as well as receiving augmentation from the US Navy Seventh Fleet in the event of a resumption of Korean hostilities. There are no US Navy combat vessels permanently stationed in the ROK.
- **Marine Corps Forces Korea** (c. 200 marines): This logistical component is charged with facilitating the [surge of US marines](#) to the peninsula in the event of war.
- **Special Operations Command Korea** (c. 200 operators [1]): This command carries out [special operations missions](#) in the Korean theater of operations.

A top-level examination of USFK's force structure reveals few assets suitable for combat around Taiwan—and therefore very little "strategic flexibility." Naval, marine, and special operations forces lack combat units or the numbers to make a significant impact in a Taiwan contingency. None of the Eighth Army's combat brigades, from [helicopter units](#) to [field artillery](#), possess the range to strike targets 900 miles away in Taiwan.

The only relevant USFK combat units are the Seventh Air Force's two F-16 super squadrons, based at [Osan Air Base](#). However, even USFK's [62](#) F-16s lack flexibility for application to crises in both Taiwan and the peninsula. This is because the combat range of F-16s is limited to a [500 mile radius](#), meaning that an F-16 launched from Osan Air Base would require at least one aerial

refueling before safely executing a mission around Taiwan. F-16 fighters—let alone the tankers that would be required to refuel them—also [lack](#) the stealth capacities to effectively evade air defenses along the PRC coast. Therefore, the F-16 would likely have to undergo multiple refuelings in a roundabout route that would take it outside the First Island Chain and back toward Taiwan. It is probably for this reason that [Taiwan crisis simulations involving USFK](#) have assumed that an F-16 squadron would simply be redeployed to a location closer to Taiwan, such as Okinawa.

However, moving a USFK F-16 squadron outside of the ROK during a Taiwan crisis would stimulate the essential problem inherent with treating USFK as a flexible expeditionary force that can flow off the peninsula: namely, that moving potent USFK assets away from the ROK during a war over Taiwan would [increase the chances](#) of North Korea attacking the South.

### *Simultaneous Strait-Peninsular Conflict*

As scholarship regarding the regional effects of a US-PRC war over Taiwan [has progressed](#), there is increasing consensus that a Taiwan Strait crisis would raise Pyongyang's incentive to conduct some kind of attack on South Korea. Since the PRC has historically been the DPRK's greatest patron in terms of [economic and security support](#), North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un may decide to conduct an attack that would distract US forces from a fight with the PRC over Taiwan, [particularly if it appeared](#) that Beijing was at risk of defeat. If the PRC faced a catastrophic defeat that could topple the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP, 中國共產黨) regime, Kim would lose his greatest benefactor. The ensuing diplomatic and economic [isolation](#) might be enough to starve his regime to the point of failure. It is reasonable to assume that Kim Jong-un would go to great lengths, including an opportunistic attack on the South, to stave off this outcome.

While Washington may hope that South Korea could counter such an opportunistic attack by itself, the fact that the DPRK possesses a nuclear arsenal—while the ROK does not—complicates this aspiration. Unless the United States (with its nuclear deterrent) is actively engaging a peninsular conflict, the DPRK would always maintain escalation dominance that could allow it to [blackmail Seoul](#) into some kind of limited capitulation. While the Trump Administration has outlined a clear [priority](#) in terms of deterring a PRC capture of Taiwan, such a defeat for South Korea could inflict [comparable harm](#) on US economic and security interests.

A simultaneous conflict may not come to fruition.

Nonetheless, the Pentagon should prepare for the possibility that it does. Such preparation would require that USFK is able to provide a combat function in both conflicts, without leaving the peninsula. USFK could thus contribute to a US intervention against the PRC, while immediately turning its focus on North Korea should Kim Jong-un decide to attack.



Image: The US Army's new Long Range Hypersonic Weapon (LRHW) (Image Source: [US Army Pacific](#))

### More Range Please

In order to provide deterrence value to both the PRC and North Korea, while allowing key assets to remain rooted to their positions on the peninsula, Washington should invest in enhanced long-range capacities for USFK.

Such enhancements to USFK's Seventh Air Force are relatively straightforward—though [expensive](#). The Pentagon should permanently station F-35 fighter aircraft in the ROK. The United States could thus maximize its deployment of fighter aircraft in forward positions in East Asia and circumvent [structural limits](#) to basing in Japan and Guam. The operational radius of F-35 fighters is around [680 miles](#), meaning that the aircraft could reach the Taiwan theater and execute a mission before withdrawing to refuel outside of the First Island Chain and return to Korea. Furthermore, the F-35's cutting-edge [stealth technologies](#) better equip it to fly past PRC defenses on a direct path to Taiwan, while raising its performance against any PRC [fifth-generation J-20 fighters](#) that it may encounter.

The F-35 is not only more useful in a Taiwan contingency, but its stealth capacities also enhance its efficacy against DPRK air defenses that have progressed in recent years. In fact, these air defense improvements have forced USFK's existing F-16 fleet to drill for [over-the-horizon fires](#) instead of incursion into DPRK airspace. USFK's Kunsan Air Base [has hosted](#) F-35s

on rotational deployments. The 8th Fighter Wing just transferred all of its remaining F-16s to form the second super squadron at Osan Air Base, leaving Kunsan [devoid of fighters](#). There is therefore a window of opportunity to deploy USAF F-35s to Kunsan, a move the Pentagon is [reportedly considering](#). F-35s would thus offer real "strategic flexibility" to the Seventh Air Force.

Modifications to enhance the combat range of the Eighth Army are more complex, but the US Army has already established the building blocks for such a change. The Pentagon should station one or more of its newly-minted [Long Range Fires Brigades](#) (LFRBs) at Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek. The LFRBs are the Army's [attempt](#) to rectify the reality that many of its traditional assets are unsuited to region-wide wars in Europe or Asia that span vast airspaces or the ocean. The Army's first LFRB was established under the [Indo-Pacific Command](#) and is based in Washington state. It operates missile platforms of ranges far exceeding traditional artillery units, including the Tomahawk cruise missile and the Pentagon's new [Long Range Hypersonic Weapon](#) (LRHW). The two missile systems have ranges of [1,500](#) and [1,725 miles](#) respectively, and are capable of striking targets on land and at sea. Basing an LFRB in the ROK would allow the Eighth Army to range targets all over North Korea as well as around Taiwan.

However, deploying the Tomahawk and LRHW missile to the peninsula would be enormously consequential to Washington's relationship to the ROK, as well as Seoul's relationship to the PRC. If LFRB's are shooting at PRC targets from the peninsula during a Taiwan crisis, Beijing would have greater incentive to conduct destabilizing strikes on ROK soil. Such a scenario may be unimaginable for South Korea's new left-wing president, Lee Jae-myung, who seeks a [diplomatic reset](#) with Beijing. Nonetheless, the United States has a chance at deploying these assets to USFK, if it can: (1) prove the LFRB's utility in a conflict against North Korea; and (2) outline an operational plan that prioritizes their use against DPRK targets over PRC ones in the event of a simultaneous conflict.

Coupled with [ongoing initiatives](#) to integrate USFK's missile defense and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems into a region-wide air defense architecture, enhancements to USFK's combat range would allow the force to get closer to true strategic flexibility. Such flexibility would allow USFK to pose a deterrence threat to both the PRC and the DPRK, without requiring the Pentagon to move assets off the peninsula in a crisis—and thus sacrifice USFK's core mission of upholding the Korean armistice.

**The main point:** Increasing discussion of USFK's application to a war over Taiwan has unnerved South Korea, which relies on a US presence on the peninsula to deter North Korea. In reality, there are few USFK assets capable of contributing to a war over Taiwan. In order to boost USFK's deterrence capacity against the PRC without sacrificing its core mission of defending South Korea, the Pentagon should further invest in long-range USFK combat capacities, including F-35 fighters and US Army Long Range Fires Brigades.

[1] Estimate provided by a SOCKOR representative following an enquiry by the author. This communication was generously facilitated by US Army Col. (Ret.) David Maxwell.

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## Takeaways from the 2025 G7 Summit and Opportunities for Taiwan

By: Adrienne Wu and Trinity Tai

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Against the backdrop of tense economic relations and the Trump Administration's isolationist approach to foreign policy, this year's G7 Summit became a bellwether for assessing each member countries' priorities and shifting relations. According to news coverage of the event, the [decision](#) to scrap the G7's usual group-wide leaders' communiqué—in favor of six, more focused joint statements—signaled a lack of unity among the current leaders. Additionally, leaders such as Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer appeared to be using the summit as an opportunity to gain favorability with Trump. Carney allegedly [modified](#) the agenda to avoid topics that the Trump Administration would deem as controversial, and Starmer set up a bilateral meeting in order to [finalize](#) a trade deal with the United States. Still, despite the apparent lack of unity and the overwhelming focus on the leaders themselves, the 2025 G7 Summit is helpful for pinpointing current concerns and areas of interest for the member countries.

Overall, the summit signals that even as G7 members look for new economic partnerships, they continue to be [wary of Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific](#) and

prioritize like-minded partners in [industries such as critical minerals](#). Additionally, the summit's [concluding statements](#) show a strong interest in artificial intelligence (AI), quantum innovation, disaster response, countering foreign interference, and fighting transnational crime—all areas in which Taiwan can contribute.

### Before the Summit

Even before the summit took place, the G7 already took a strong stance in support of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Following the March 14 meeting in Charlevoix, the G7 foreign ministers released a [joint statement](#) that “emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,” and encouraged “Taiwan’s meaningful participation in appropriate international organizations.” *Reuters* also [noted](#) that the statement did not contain any reference to “One-China” policies, which was a break from past G7 statements. A spokesperson for the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) foreign ministry [criticized](#) the G7 a few days before the summit and warned the countries to “stop interfering in other countries’ internal affairs, stop undermining other countries’ development, (and) stop manipulating issues related to China.” The G7 Summit offers an opportunity for the members to speak with a united voice, which [also plays a role in deterring China](#)—an opportunity that would naturally be lost if [China ends up joining the G7 in the future](#).

Going into the summit meeting in Kananaskis, Prime Minister Carney stated that the summit would [focus on](#): peace and stability; energy security and digital transition; and economic partnerships. Across these areas, economic security and development was a through-line between many of the topics, and [analysts](#) indicated that Carney likely invited Indian Prime Minister Modi to attend with the hopes of diversifying Canadian trade relations. As many countries reevaluate their trade relations—particularly their relations with the United States—the PRC has discussed strengthening trade relations with [France](#), [Canada](#), and [Japan](#) to varying degrees of success. In the week before the G7 Summit, the United States also held [trade talks](#) with the PRC.

Simultaneously, concerns over PRC military aggression have led many of the G7 members to take a stronger stance on defense, to include support for de-risking supply chains. To counter [China’s increasingly aggressive posture](#), Japan [increased](#) defense spending by 21 percent in 2024, to a total of 1.4 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP). In 2023, Italy also withdrew from China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, formerly known as “One Belt, One Road,” 一帶一路) due to

[“unmet promises and the country’s strategic reassessment of China.”](#) Therefore, while some countries may be interested in increasing trade relations with China, many still have concerns about the PRC’s reliability as a partner and its security liabilities. In comparison, Taiwan has proven to be a reliable, likeminded ally, with Taiwan and Canada both endorsing a [“Collaborative Framework on Supply Chains Resilience.”](#)



*Image: G7 Leaders pose for a photo at the 51<sup>st</sup> G7 Summit in Canada. (Image Source: [Flickr via Wikimedia Commons](#).)*

### **G7 Statements and Opportunities for Taiwan**

In addition to broader geopolitical concerns raised before and during the G7 Summit, Prime Minister Carney also [posted](#) a series of joint statements upon the summit’s conclusion, which focus on the specific areas below.

#### *Critical Minerals and Supply Chains*

In the [G7 Critical Minerals Action Plan](#), the G7 leaders highlighted three main areas for future collaboration: building standards-based markets, mobilizing capital and investing in partnerships, and promoting innovation. Despite lacking domestic reserves of critical minerals, Taiwan is a [significant player](#) when it comes to downstream processing and high-tech manufacturing. In particular, rare earth elements (REEs) are [key components](#) in semiconductor production, making Taiwan’s semiconductor industry extremely vulnerable to any critical mineral supply chain disruptions. Not only does Taiwan have a vested interest in making supply chains more resilient, but Taiwan’s private sector and non-profit organizations are [already conducting research on ways to make the critical minerals economy more sustainable](#). While the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company’s (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造

股份有限公司) inclusion in [SEMI’s Supply Chain Management Initiative](#) is a positive step, Taiwanese representatives should be invited to pivotal conferences, such as the upcoming [Conference on Critical Materials and Minerals](#) in Chicago. At the same time, Taiwanese companies and organizations should prioritize international partnerships—especially with G7 countries—when conducting research on critical minerals and when making investments. For instance, increasing investments into [Quebec’s critical minerals industry](#) would both help Taiwan decrease its dependence on Chinese REEs and strengthen relations between Taiwan and Canada.

#### *Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Innovation*

Similar to the G7 Critical Minerals Action Plan, the G7 leaders’ statements on [AI for Prosperity](#) and a [Common Vision for the Future of Quantum Technologies](#) represent an overall goal of innovating with trusted partners. Particularly under AI, the [G7 statement](#) outlines several factors as part of their AI adoption roadmap, including: accelerate AI readiness and competitiveness, develop an AI adoption blueprint, expand G7 talent exchanges, and to unlock AI-opportunity. In terms of quantum technology, the [statement](#) outlines the intention to “create a trusted ecosystem to manage risks and unleash innovation” through international collaboration. In the fields of both AI and quantum technologies, the Taiwanese government, private sectors, and civil society would be ideal partners that share the values and interests of the G7 countries, while also having a strong technology industry. In 2021, Taipei committed to investing [NTD 8 billion](#) (USD 288.2 million) in quantum technology from 2022-2026. The Executive Yuan also announced that they will reveal a [new program](#) later this year, which will focus on cultivating Taiwan’s capabilities in “intelligent robots, quantum technology, silicon photonics and ‘sovereign AI.’”

In addition to government programs, Taiwan’s [National Center for High-Performance Computing](#) announced that a new AI supercomputing system—built by ASUS and powered by NVIDIA—would be operational at their center in 2025. While the supercomputer is not a quantum computer, it will improve Taiwanese researchers’ ability to produce research on quantum technologies. Moreover, the project positions Taiwan as an emerging hub for quantum technology research, and makes it an attractive partner for future international collaborations on AI and quantum technology. As Taiwan continues to expand its AI and quantum technology capacities, Taiwanese partners would be ideal participants for G7 initiatives that focus on AI and

quantum technology. Since G7 working groups, such as the [G7 Joint Working Group on Quantum Technologies](#), are limited to G7 member countries, cooperation with Taiwan should be pursued through alternative methods. For instance, Taipei could host parallel events that are in conversation with the objectives of G7 Working Groups, or G7 members could pursue bilateral or multilateral cooperation with Taiwan outside of the G7 framework.

### *Countering Foreign Interference*

Taiwan's civil society has developed [robust strategies](#) to counter foreign interference as a target of PRC gray zone and information operations. Additionally, these strategies can act as lessons learned for other countries who are bolstering their own efforts to counter foreign interference. As independent researcher Sze-Fung Lee has [pointed out](#), Taiwan's decentralized model of countering disinformation can be used as a foundation for improving current efforts to counter foreign interference, including in the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism (G7 RRM). The recent [G7 Leaders' Statement on Transnational Repression](#) listed specific ways in which the G7 intended to build upon the G7 RRM, including the launch of a Digital Transnational Repression Detection Academy "to build collective capacity to detect [transnational repression] online" and highlighting the need to increase cooperation with like-minded partners. Taiwanese organizations—such as Doublethink Lab, Taiwan Information Environment Research Center (IORG), and Taiwan AI Labs—should be included within these new initiatives. Not only do these organizations have substantial databases on PRC influence operations, but they can help in training new researchers and have experience in [detecting AI-generated disinformation](#).

### *Fighting Transnational Crime and Disaster Response*

As part of the G7's efforts to fight transnational crimes and respond to disasters, the G7 leaders released two documents: [G7 Leaders' Statement on Countering Migrant Smuggling](#) and the [Kananaskis Wildfire Charter](#). While the areas of AI, quantum technology, and countering foreign interference are opportunities for Taiwan to share its expertise with G7 partners, countering migrant smuggling and wildfire prevention are two areas in which Taiwan could benefit from international cooperation. Last year, Taiwan's Control Yuan [called](#) for improvements to Taiwan's immigrant policies and raised concerns over possible human trafficking due to the large numbers of undocumented migrant workers: for example, in [April 2024](#) a Taiwanese captain was found to be smuggling Vietnamese migrants. The G7

Summit statement could be an opportunity for Taipei to reflect on much-needed updates to laws regarding migrant workers, including [providing labor insurance](#) to domestic workers.

Similarly, wildfire resilience is another challenge that Taiwan is currently dealing with. Research conducted through a partnership between Utah State University and National Chung Hsing University showed that there was a [quantifiable increase](#) in Taiwanese wildfires. When discussing how to help Taiwan improve disaster response to wildfires, the researchers recommended holding an [international symposium](#) to discuss best practices. However, considering Taiwan's controversial status at international organizations like the United Nations, it is unclear if they would be able to participate in—or even observe—the work of the [United Nations Global Fire Management Hub](#). In supporting a global, coordinated approach to wildfire resilience, G7 countries should support Taiwan's inclusion or pursue meetings with Taiwan alongside UN and G20 meetings.

Outside of the specific sub-issues of migrant workers and wildfire resilience, the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF) is an important platform for sharing Taiwan's knowledge of fighting transnational crime and disaster response training. In addition to Taiwan and Australia, three of the seven G7 members (United States, Japan, and Canada) are [full partners](#) of GCTF. As a result, G7 members who are looking to advance the aims of the G7 Summit could easily leverage the platform as a way of enhancing cooperation and global awareness. In the past few years, GCTF workshops have promoted [international humanitarian rescue efforts](#), discussed how to [combat transnational fraud](#), and highlighted [international anti-corruption efforts](#), among other topics.

### **Recommendations**

1. G7 countries should engage Taiwanese partners in G7 initiatives and in related upcoming conferences in order to benefit from Taiwan's expertise in AI, quantum innovation, and countering foreign influence; and to help Taiwan improve in the areas of migrant laws and wildfire resilience. If G7 countries are hesitant to engage with Taiwan under the umbrella of G7 programs, then they could pursue bilateral or multilateral cooperation with Taiwan outside of the G7 framework—not only through governments, but also through private industries and non-state actors. Additionally, Taipei should host parallel events that align with the objectives of G7 Working Groups.

2. Taiwan and G7 members should leverage existing platforms like the Global Cooperation and Training Framework in order to counter global challenges and facilitate knowledge sharing. Just last month, representatives from the GCTF partner countries released a [statement](#) indicating their interest in “exploring new opportunities for deepening [its] engagements, including through longer-term programs and exchanges.” Therefore, using GCTF as a platform for G7-related activities could represent a new opportunity that would not only help fulfill G7 goals, but would also be an opportunity to fulfill GCTF objectives.

**The main point:** Despite the absence of a summit-wide communique and a focus on the individual leaders in news coverage of the recent G7 Summit, a closer look at the concluding statements indicates that there are possible areas for cooperation with Taiwan. In addition to being a like-minded ally, Taiwan’s expertise in critical minerals, artificial intelligence, quantum innovation, and countering foreign interference means that it will be an important partner in future initiatives. Additionally, Taiwan’s Global Cooperation and Training Framework can provide a platform for multilateral engagement on fighting transnational crime and improving disaster resilience.

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