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Trump's Policy toward Taiwan: Compounding Strategic Ambiguity

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The United States' cross-Strait policy is one of the most decisive factors shaping the strategies of both China and Taiwan. Current US President Donald Trump's approach, widely seen as transactional and unpredictable on regional security and alliance management issues, has increased uncertainty regarding the Taiwan Strait. A closer look at Trump's policies during his first year in office reflects several key trends: ranging from compounding strategic ambiguity to trade renegotiated in America's favor. There is also a more activist 119th Congress— which, since taking its two-year term in January 2025, has introduced an unprecedented number of Taiwan-related bills.

Strategic Ambiguity

While most US presidential administrations have been widely described as pursuing a policy of "strategic ambiguity" towards Taiwan since 1979, President Trump's approach has compounded this ambiguity through contradictory signaling—and, at other times, striking silence. [1] Some of Trump's policy maneuvers unnerving Taiwan have included pressuring Taipei to raise defense spending to 10 percent of GDP, while repeatedly urging higher defense outlays in parallel with expanded U.S. arms sales; maintaining heavy tariffs and trade policies under an "America First" approach; and continuing to frame alliances and security commitments in transactional terms. The uncertainty triggered by these actions could possibly be one of the reasons behind Taiwan President Lai Ching-te's (賴清德) unprecedented defense modernization effort in 2025.

Nonetheless, despite these pressures and uncertainties, the Trump Administration has implemented a range of policies supportive of Taiwan. It has pressed Taipei to substantially increase defense spending and has welcomed Taiwan's move to adopt a large multi-year special defense budget to fund force modernization and asymmetric capabilities. After initial backlogging, the administration approved a record USD 11 billion package to support

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Taiwan's move toward asymmetric warfare. The approval of this package invoked a strong reaction from China. At the same time, the Trump Administration signaled the possibility of record-high arms sales in 2026 and signed into law the *Taiwan Assurance Implementation Act*, which would require the State Department to regularly review US-Taiwan relations.

At the same time, notable public silence was another feature of Trump's strategic ambiguity towards Taiwan. For context, some of Trump's predecessors have been less reserved when asked about the US commitment regarding a potential Taiwan contingency. For instance, President Joe Biden stated on four different occasions that the United States would intervene if Taiwan were invaded by China. Similarly, when former President George W. Bush was asked if Washington had an obligation to defend Taiwan if it was attacked by China, he replied: "Yes, we do, and the Chinese must understand that. Yes, I would."

Conversely, Trump has maintained a notably cautious public stance. On several occasions, when pressed on how he would respond to a People's Republic of China (PRC) invasion of Taiwan, Trump's responses included: "I don't comment because I don't ever want to put myself in that position," "You'll find out if it happens, and [Xi] understands the answer to that," and "I can't give away my secrets. The other side knows." In a January interview with *The New York Times*, Trump further compounded this ambiguity. On the one hand, he stated that actions regarding Taiwan would be up to Xi Jinping; while on the other, he claimed that China would not invade until the end of his term in office, and that he would be very unhappy about such an outcome. For a president known for discussing everything, remaining "noticeably cagey" about Taiwan was extraordinarily unusual.

While there remain different interpretations of Trump's decision not to raise the Taiwan issue during his first face-to-face meeting with Xi Jinping in South Korea in October 2025, one argument is that this reflected his continued ambiguity on the matter. This left both Beijing and Taipei speculating about his stance. In a subsequent telephone call, Xi Jinping was reported to have told Trump (per Chinese media) that Taiwan's "return" to China is a key element of the post-war international order, framing unification as part of the unresolved legacy of the Second World War and the post-1945 settlement.

Pushing Taiwan for a Defense Buildup and Self-Reliance

Another important component of Trump's Taiwan policy has been pressing the island to enhance its self-defense through an increased defense budget and structural reforms. In contrast, most past US administrations regarded arms sales and occasional US military posturing during cross-Strait tensions as primary signals of support. These traditional policies have kept Taiwan heavily reliant on the United States for its defense.

In contrast, the Trump Administration—under its broad strategy of demanding all its allies raise defense spending and improve burden-sharing—has demanded that Taiwan raise its defense budget to an exorbitant 10 percent of GDP. While achieving a 10 percent figure is unrealistic, Taiwanese authorities have announced that they will increase defense spending to 3.3 percent of GDP by 2026, and to 5 percent by 2030—the largest increase in Taiwan's history. Taipei also restructured its defense sector, implemented an "all-out defense concept," invested in new weapons systems, and strengthened indigenous defense production.

Taipei's increased defense spending would ultimately serve American interests. Firstly, it would enhance Taiwan's defense modernization and strengthen self-reliance, thereby reducing America's responsibility and lowering the risk of entanglement. Secondly, because a large share of Taiwan's weapons procurements and defense advisory support comes from the United States, these expenditures would ultimately bolster the US defense industrial base and align with Trump's "America First" agenda.

Activist Congress Advances Unprecedented Taiwan-Friendly Legislation

It is also notable that since starting its two-year term in January 2025 (parallel with Trump's second four-year term), the 119th Congress has introduced or passed over a dozen Taiwan-related legislative measures, an unusually high number by historical standards. The Republican majority in the US Congress—along with the perception that the president would not veto Taiwan-related bills—likely contributed to the rapid pace of such legislation.

In December 2025, Trump signed into law the *Taiwan Assurance Implementation Act*, which will explore ways for the United States to gradually remove self-imposed "red lines" on official government contact with Taiwan. This was the first Taiwan-related law enacted in Trump's second term.

The 119th Congress is also moving ahead with other important bills: which include the *PORCUPINE Act*,

which would treat Taiwan similarly to "NATO Plus" partners for expediting arms transfers and defense assistance; the *Deter PRC Aggression Against Taiwan Act*, which would establish a sanctions framework if China uses force or coercion against Taiwan; the *US-Taiwan Partnership in the Americas Act*, which would support Latin American and Caribbean states that maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan, and help them resist Beijing's economic pressure; and the *Taiwan International Solidarity Act*, which would clarify that UN Resolution 2758 does not determine Taiwan's sovereignty or representation, and would seek to remove hurdles to Taiwan's participation in international organizations.

If enacted, these bills would strengthen US-Taiwan ties, enhance Taiwan's international participation, and counter China's efforts to isolate Taiwan—especially regarding its membership in various international bodies.

The US National Security Strategy: Elevating Taiwan's Status, Lowering Commitments

The Trump Administration's December 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS)—a document published by every new presidential administration that lays out overall US security priorities—also provides guidelines for its Taiwan policy and regional strategy. The NSS highlighted Taiwan's significance not only because of its semiconductor industry, but also because of its strategic location—which, according to the NSS, "provides direct access to the Second Island Chain and splits Northeast and Southeast Asia into two distinct theatres. Given that one-third of global shipping passes annually through the South China Sea, this has major implications for the US economy." Therefore, "deterring a conflict over Taiwan, ideally by preserving military overmatch, is a priority."

Strategic ambiguity is also manifested in the NSS. While it elevated Taiwan's status, the NSS downgraded the US commitment by replacing the word "oppose" with "does not support" in reference to a "unilateral change to the status quo" (a catch-all term for a PRC invasion or a declaration of independence by Taipei). The 2022 NSS issued by the Biden Administration stated that the US "opposed" unilateral changes to the status quo; whereas the 2025 NSS stated that "the United States does not support any unilateral change to the status quo in the Taiwan Strait." Some analysts argue that this represents a policy shift: as the word "oppose" implies active resistance and potential consequences, while "does not support" indicates a more passive form of disapproval.

A US-Taiwan Trade Deal, under Tariff and Investment Pressure

Trump's forceful pursuit of a trade deal with Taiwan is another lens through which to analyze his cross-Strait policy. On April 2, 2025, Trump imposed a broad 32 percent "reciprocal" tariff on most imports from Taiwan. This rate was higher than some other US partners in Asia. As part of its broader trade strategy, the Trump Administration used steep reciprocal tariffs to push Taiwan into rapid tariff and trade negotiations with Washington, seeking to secure a more favorable deal. The administration was well aware that under increasing Chinese pressure—with a growing number of military exercises around Taiwan—Taiwan had no option but to negotiate with the United States.

Throughout this period, Taipei refrained from trade retaliation. To further appease Trump, Taiwan increased investment and industrial cooperation in major American firms. For example, TSMC pledged about USD 100 billion for new fabs and capacity expansion in Arizona. Under a deal announced by the US Department of Commerce in January 2026, Taiwan's semiconductor and technology companies committed to at least USD 250 billion in new direct investment in US manufacturing; while the Taiwan government promised an additional USD 250 billion in credit guarantees to help smaller supply-chain firms build or expand plants in the USA.

Conclusion

By the end of the first year of the Trump Administration, the contours of its Taiwan policy were clear. At the rhetorical level, Trump not only maintained the United States' traditional policy of strategic ambiguity but further compounded it. As a president known for his propensity to talk, Trump's striking silence on pointed questions about Taiwan was surprising. Meanwhile, contrasting US signaling towards both Beijing and Taipei, such as the combination of a moderated rhetorical commitment in the 2025 NSS and an increase in sales of weapons to Taiwan, added to this ambiguity.

Aware of China's growing pressure on Taiwan through military exercises, the Trump Administration has adeptly exploited the situation to secure a US-tilted trade deal, extracting large-scale investments from Taiwan. Taiwan had no option but to accede to Trump's terms.

Whether it was due to Trump's pressure, or to Taipei's own assessment of China's plans to apply further coercive pressure in the not-so-distant future, Taiwan has also embarked on unprecedented defense modernization. This would invariably help the United States

by pushing Taiwan to take greater responsibility for its own defense—thus reducing the prospects of potential direct American involvement, and benefiting the US military-industrial complex by facilitating large-scale orders from Taiwan.

In 2026, one of the key developments to watch will be the progress of US-China trade talks. It remains to be seen whether Trump will use the Taiwan card as a bargaining chip—as some analysts have speculated—and what position Trump takes during his first visit to China in early 2026.

The main point: Trump's policy towards Taiwan during this second term amplifies long-standing "strategic ambiguity," combining high tariffs and pressure for greater self-defense with record arms sales and pro-Taiwan legislation. Similar mixed signals appear in his NSS 2025. These contrasting policies of coercive economic statecraft, security support, and notable rhetorical silence have heightened uncertainty in Beijing and Taipei about Washington's ultimate intentions in a cross-Strait crisis.

[1] The term "strategic ambiguity" is not an official, codified US policy label, but an analytic description commonly used in academia and policy debates to characterize Washington's deliberate refusal to state clearly whether it would use force to defend Taiwan.

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What Taiwan's Defense Innovators Can Learn from Canada's Defence IDEaS & MINDS

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Taiwan faces near-daily threats from the rising number of incursions by the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including aircraft, vessels, and unmanned platforms. To strengthen deterrence and rapidly prototype and adopt emerging technologies and capabilities at scale, Taiwan cannot afford to base its defense innovation and dual-use technology efforts on American institutional models alone. In particular, Taiwan should not seek to establish an exact replica of the Pentagon's Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) in the Ministry of National Defense's (國防部, MND) new Defense Innovation Office (國防創新小組, DIO).

As a middle power with an economy driven by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), Taiwan should leverage its strengths to design a more agile defense innovation system. To achieve this, Taiwan should look to the defense innovation ecosystem of another middle power: Canada. Specifically, Taipei should draw from the Canadian Department of National Defence's (DND) programs: Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) and Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS).

To address threats from across the strait, Taiwan's President William Lai (賴清德) launched the MND's DIO on February 1, 2024. The entity's existence was only revealed seven months later, on September 18, 2024. Nearly two years after its establishment, the MND's *2025 National Defense Report* (NDR, 114年國防報告書), defined and outlined DIO's principal mission as follows:

The DIO will incorporate innovative operating concepts, conduct survey studies on the development of domestic and overseas defense industries, and make announcements or hold industry roundtable meetings to request technology solutions, including mature technologies, prototype development, and finished products, which will be acquired if they are determined to meet needs after evaluation.

The NDR further notes that Taiwan is actively engaging and collaborating with DIU and the US Indo-Pacific Command to stay abreast of emerging defense technologies. Furthermore, the NDR states that US defense innovation connections are the foundation for introducing, adapting, and integrating future technology into Taiwan's defense system. DIO's core mission and focus areas closely align with those of the Pentagon's DIU, as both an inspiration and a blueprint.

Nonetheless, Taiwan should not seek to replicate the US DIU wholesale, but rather build on its successes while integrating defense innovation lessons from other small and medium powers with SME-driven economies. Canada's DND IDEaS and MINDS programs emphasize ecosystem development, workforce and policy pipelines, and export-oriented growth, offering a more relevant model for Taiwan's economic, military, and geopolitical realities. Practical defense innovation can bridge Taiwan's military and civilian economies, fuel economic growth, strengthen deterrence against the PLA, and enable exports to like-minded partners.

DIU Limitations

Founded in April 2015 as the "Defense Innovation Unit Experimental," America's DIU states that its mission is "accelerating the adoption of commercial technology throughout the military and bolstering our allied and national security innovation bases." To achieve this, DIU seeks to "rapidly prototype and field dual-use capabilities that solve operational challenges at speed and scale" for US military customers. Although DIU is framed as an "innovation" organization, akin to Pentagon-wide and service-level innovation components such as the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) or AFWERX, functionally it is a rapid dual-use technology acquisition entity, which is a tension DIO can avoid as it clarifies its roles and missions.

To cover all nine Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) of (COTS) technologies, DIU comprises three components: the main DIU, the National Security Innovation Network (NSIN), and the National Security Innovation Capital (NSIC). Overall, DIU focuses on TRLs six through nine (mature technologies), while NSIN and NSIC concentrate on TRLs one through five (nascent technologies). NSIN emphasizes talent development and engagement with startups, academic institutions, and venture capital communities, whereas NSIC provides capital to early-stage companies keen on specific dual-use applications. DIU primarily relies on acquisition mechanisms such as "Commercial Solutions Openings" and "Other Transactions" authority to transition dual-use and COTS technologies from prototypes to programs of record, bypassing many traditional acquisition bottlenecks.

According to a Congressional Research Service report, DIU's progress is hampered by the roughly 300 innovation-related entities under the Pentagon, which operate without a unified outreach, industry engagement, and funding strategy. While DIO should adopt parts of DIU, it should expand its focus to align firmly with the national priority of developing a strong indigenous drone industry that benefits both civilian and military applications, while promoting economic growth. Canada's IDEaS and MINDS offer relevant frameworks to emulate to pursue these goals.

Innovative IDEaS & MINDS

Created through the Canadian DND's 2017 *Strong, Secure, Engaged* defense policy paper, IDEaS was designed not only to equip the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), but also to explicitly create "well-paying jobs for Canadians" and "export opportunities for Canadian Industry," and to "grow and support Canada's innovation community." To achieve this, IDEaS comprises five funding elements that diverge from DIU, including competitive projects, innovation networks, contests, sandboxes, and test drives. Each component is part of the puzzle in providing potential solutions to the problem sets and challenges faced by the DND and CAF. However, unlike DIU, IDEaS is not focused on a single set of TRLs but rather on all levels from one to nine, depending on the particular solution sought. Although the focus is on Canadian industry, IDEaS also accepts proposals from abroad, provided they have a Canadian content aspect of roughly 50-80 percent.

Image: A Canadian government promotional graphic for the "Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security" (MINDS) program. (Image source: Canadian Ministry of Defence X account)

Some of IDEaS' solution examples include a call for research into the barriers to the adoption of autonomous defense systems, a contest to accelerate the development of low-cost and scalable first-person view aerial drones and control unit solutions, and a sandbox to counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems through detection and elimination. Public data on how many IDEaS projects transition into large-scale production is limited. Still, IDEaS' prioritization of ecosystem development, workforce pipelines, and export-oriented growth aligns well with Taiwan's SME-concentrated economic and defense innovation needs.

Complementing IDEaS, MINDS addresses a different yet critical gap, which is somewhat fulfilled by DIU's NSIN component. Launched in 2017 alongside IDEaS, MINDS funds policy solution calls that tap into academic research networks, support emerging subject-matter experts, scholars, and students, and facilitate dialogue among civil society, academia, government, and the military on defense and security topics. The five components that make up MINDS include the expert briefing series, targeted engagement grants, collaborative networks, rapid response mechanism, and scholarships. These components represent engagement path-

ways that Taiwan's MND currently lacks when soliciting solutions for doctrine, tactics, operations, and strategy from civilians.

By incorporating elements of MINDS to complement DIO's rapid-acquisition mandate, Taiwan would better institutionalize its science and technology parks and university research and development hubs. Without formal mechanisms to harness this centralized talent, given Taiwan's advanced AI workforce development and higher education levels, critical assets to address national security and economic growth challenges remain untouched.

Recommendations

Clarify DIO's Role to Avoid Innovation and Acquisition Tensions: Drawing on a core lesson from DIU's early development, Taiwan should clearly delineate DIO's innovation and ecosystem-building mandate from the acquisition and production roles already performed by the state-owned corporations Aerospace Industrial Development Corporation (漢翔航空工業股份有限公司) and the National Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology (國家中山科學研究院). Doing so frees DIO to leverage Taiwan's SME-heavy economy, workforce development, and a dual-use innovation pipeline without inheriting the constraints of acquisition-centric approaches.

Cover All of the TRL Spectrum: Learning from IDEaS, DIO should promote solutions that seek TRLs relevant to that specific issue, regardless of the TRL, to strengthen Taiwan's SME ecosystem and diversify away from large foreign defense technology companies.

Solutions from IDEaS: DIO should follow IDEaS' solutions toolkit of competitive projects, contests, sandboxes, test drives, and innovation networks. This allows for more diverse solutions to address defense problems by flattening the distance between operational end users and counterparts in industry, academia, and civil society.

Foster Policy, Talent, and Research Through MINDS: Fostering policy, talent, and research requires novel defense innovation solutions from across industry, academia, and civil society, similar to what MINDS provides for DND and CAF. Therefore, DIO should seek to emulate MINDS's five components of expert briefing series, targeted engagement grants, collaborative networks, rapid response mechanism, and scholarships. This will allow DIO and other MND components to seek direct policy solutions across Taiwan's civilian population.

The Future of Taiwan's Defense Innovation

The Lai Administration's priorities, such as the development of the drone industry, the establishment of the Whole-of-Society Defense Resilience Committee (全社會防衛韌性委員會), and the implementation of the Taiwan Open Government National Action Plan (臺灣開放政府國家行動方案), highlight the need for mechanisms that extend beyond MND. While DIO's DIU-inspired model ensures compatibility with the Pentagon and INDOPACOM, its exclusive focus within MND risks hindering the growth of a national innovation ecosystem that bridges military and civilian applications. To meet its strategic and economic goals, Taiwan should pursue a hybrid innovation model, combining DIU's technical strengths with Canada's IDEaS and MINDS, whose middle-power approach aligns more closely with Taiwan's structure and ambitions.

Canadian DND's initiatives, such as IDEaS and MINDS, aim to promote a broader innovation base. Unlike DIU, IDEaS funds multi-stage innovation competitions that connect SMEs directly to the procurement pipeline, mapping domestic supply chains to mitigate foreign dependencies. Meanwhile, MINDS finances academic research networks and policy dialogues that align national innovation priorities with defense needs, capabilities that Taiwan currently lacks. While DIU emphasizes speed and prototype transition, IDEaS and MINDS focus on ecosystem development, open competition, and talent pipelines, which are better suited to Taiwan's SME-dominant economy, robust university system, and whole-of-society defense vision.

DIO's evolution should aim to accelerate acquisition for MND while fostering a globally competitive dual-use technology sector capable of exporting Chinese component-free drones and other defense technologies to like-minded democracies. By bridging the gaps between defense innovation and national innovation as well as civilian and military economies, Taiwan can employ DIO as a cornerstone of economic growth and strategic deterrence in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

The main point: Taiwan's Defense Innovation Office should not strictly follow the model of the US Defense Innovation Unit. Instead, Taiwan should adopt defense innovation and dual-use technology lessons from similar middle powers such as Canada, including the country's Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) and Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) initiatives, to foster civilian and military economic development by promoting a robust ecosystem, talent pipeline, and policy bench to build up its dual-use technology ecosystems.

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High-Level Latin American Delegation Visits to Taiwan in 2025

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Latin America is a critical region for Taiwan's diplomacy. Seven of its 12 remaining diplomatic allies—Paraguay, Guatemala, Belize, Haiti, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia—are located in the Americas. During a time of growing Chinese aggression directed against the island, these countries host Taiwanese embassies and support Taiwan in multilateral organizations.

Even though the remainder of Latin American countries have switched diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China (PRC), several of these countries have still increased government-to-government cooperation with Taipei. Costa Rica, Colombia, and Panama—which all recognize the PRC—each sent delegations to meet with Taiwanese officials and entrepreneurs in 2025.

These visits occur as the US government has named countering PRC influence and preserving Taiwan's diplomatic allies as top foreign policy priorities in the Americas, and as growing numbers of Latin American governments are diplomatically aligning with Washington. Part of some countries' alignment strategies has included diplomatic engagement with Taiwan.

Costa Rica, Colombia, and Panama's growing diplomacy with Taiwan demonstrates how Taipei can maintain global engagement despite Beijing's diplomatic isolation efforts, and how Latin American countries—even without formal diplomatic relations—can explore new opportunities with Taiwan.

Costa Rica: Intelligence Training and the Pursuit of Semiconductor Cooperation

In May 2025, Costa Rica sent five intelligence officials to Taipei for training, the first official intelligence exchange since the Central American country severed relations with Taiwan in 2007. The officials—from the Costa Rican Directorate of Intelligence and Security (DIS)—spent more than three weeks in Taiwan while attending a basic intelligence course. Costa Rica's presidential office indicated that the opportunity to collaborate with Taiwan was significant given Costa Rica's small intelligence service budget.

Over the same period, Costa Rica's Foreign Trade Promoter (PROCOMER), a government agency promoting foreign investments and exports, sent two officials to Taiwan to attract investment focused on semiconductor industry cooperation. PROCOMER's press office commented that "Taiwan plays an extremely relevant role in the agenda of attracting firms from the semiconductor industry."

These trips were not the only ones made by Costa Rican officials to Taiwan this year. In September, a PROCOMER delegation attended SEMICON Taiwan, representing the first ever Costa Rican attendance, and hosted one of 17 country pavilions. The chip convention included 100,000 visitors from 65 countries, 1,200 exhibitors, and 4,100 booths at Taipei's Nangang Exhibition Center (南港展覽館), with firms showcasing the entire semiconductor supply chain. Costa Rica's delegation aimed to position the Central American country as a provider of global chips, and to attract new industry investments to create jobs domestically. Manuel Tovar, Costa Rica's Minister of Foreign Commerce, stated that "We look to position Costa Rica more in this ecosystem and attract investment and employment for Costa Ricans."

Chip cooperation with Taiwan is a natural fit for Costa Rica, whose semiconductor industry dates to the late 1990s, when Intel opened the largest microchip factory in Central America near San Jose and invested USD 390 million in operations, creating several thousand jobs and earning Costa Rica the nickname the "Silicon Jungle". In September 2023, Intel announced a USD 1.2 billion planned investment in Costa Rica; and the following March, Costa Rica's government announced a new National Semiconductor Roadmap to develop further its lucrative and globally-critical industry. As the producer of 60 percent of total chips and nearly 90 percent of the most complex semiconductors, Taiwan has much to offer Costa Rica's chip industry in ways of inspiration, investments, and supply chain integration.

While Costa Rica continues to promote its semiconductor industry and insulate itself from China-linked cyberattacks, opportunities for cooperation with Taiwan on chips and intelligence continue to present themselves.

Colombia: Congressional and Commercial Opportunities

Twice last year, Colombian congressional delegations visited Taipei. The first was a six-member team led by Jose Luis Pérez, the former chair of the Colombian Senate's Foreign Affairs Committee. The group met with several Taiwanese officials in September 2025 to discuss deepening bilateral cooperation. The delegation's members were part of the Colombia-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group, one of more than 50 such groups worldwide.

When meeting with the Colombian representatives, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung (林佳龍) thanked the delegation for supporting Taiwan, and noted major potential for bilateral cooperation and strengthened economic ties. Pérez, in return, pledged to continue advocating for Taiwan's international participation in Colombia's congress and at global fora. The delegation also met with a parliamentary counterpart, Legislative Yuan Vice President Dr. Johnny C. Chiang (江啟臣). During the meeting, the delegation invited representatives of the Legislative Yuan to make a reciprocal visit to Colombia, and expressed a desire to reopen a representative office in Taipei. (Colombia's government had opened a representative office to promote bilateral commerce in 1993, but closed it in 2002 due to a lack of funding.)

Image: Minister of Foreign Affairs Lin Chia-lung (林佳龍), *center, meets with delegation of Colombian lawmakers in Taipei (September 26, 2025). (Image source: ROC-Taiwan.org)*

These congressional ties have strengthened in both Taiwan and Colombia. On October 10, 2025, Taiwan's Commercial Office in Colombia hosted a celebration for the National Day of the Republic of China with more than 200 attendees, including more than 10 Colombian legislators. The next month, another Colombian congressional delegation—including the chairs of Colombia's Senate and House foreign affairs committees—visited Taipei and met with Foreign Minister Lin.

These visits have been testaments to Taiwan's economic significance to Colombia. Just weeks before the first congressional visit this year, the "Taiwan Trade Mission to Latin America 2025"visited Colombia, along with Brazil, Peru, and Chile. In Colombia, representatives from more than 30 Taiwanese companies met with 95 Colombian firms, facilitating 142 business talks across diverse economic sectors. For years, Taiwan has sent thousands of tourists and provided millions in investments to Colombia. In July, Colombia's Institute of Technical Standards and Certification signed a bilateral agreement with the Taiwan Testing and Certification Center (台灣商品檢測驗證中心) to facilitate bilateral commerce. The agreement highlighted the exchange of industrial technology from Taiwan; and minerals, energy inputs, and agricultural products on the part of Columbia.

Colombia currently faces a watershed political moment with an upcoming presidential election in May. Given the sub-40 percent approval rating of President Gustavo Petro—who hitched Colombia to Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (一帶一路) this year after disputes with US President Trump—the outlook is dim for incumbents and bright for candidates promising change, including mending relations with the United States. As the second Trump Administration has pledged to defend Taiwan's diplomatic standing in Latin America, an administration more aligned with the United States in Bogotá could also strengthen ties with Taipei.

Panama: Promoting Commerce and Democracy

In November 2025, a group of Panamanian National Assembly representatives visited Taiwan for the first time since the country switched diplomatic relations from Taiwan to the PRC in 2017. The nine-member delegation was made up of congressional representatives led by Manuel Cohen and Ronald Ameth De Gracia Moreno. The lawmakers are all members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC, 對中政策跨國議會聯盟), an international coalition representing 44 parliaments—including those of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Panama in Latin America—formed in 2020 to demand "accountability from China." The Panamanian representatives joined IPAC in August, a move that the US Ambassador to Panama publicly supported.

In Taipei, the lawmakers met with Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴), Legislative Speaker Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), and Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung. The group also visited government agencies—including Taiwan's

Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA, 經濟部), the International Trade Administration (國際貿易署), the Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI, 工業技術研究院), and the International Cooperation and Development Fund (ICDF, 國際合作發展基金會).

In bilateral meetings, the delegation discussed technological cooperation, clean energy, and bilateral commerce. The Panamanian representatives noted that Taiwan is Panama's second largest export market, importing Panamanian bananas, coffee, shrimp, and other seafood products. Their visit did not only entail economics, with Cohen commenting at a banquet that Panama views Taiwan "as an example in the promotion of democracy, freedom and respect for human rights."

Image: A group of Panamanian legislators arriving in Taiwan for a delegation visit (Nov. 25, 2025). (Image source: ROC OCAC)

The Panamanian legislature was not the only government branch that endorsed deepening ties with Taipei. While Panamanian President Raúl Mulino tweeted that he did not approve of the visit, he stated shortly before the trip that he would consider allowing Taiwan to open a commercial office in Panama. In a press conference, Mulino criticized China's attempt to bar Panama from opening such an office when it switched relations in 2017. Referencing the 104 years of bilateral relations between the Republic of China and Republic of Panama, Mulino stated that one could not forget that "Panama was a great friend of Taiwan and Taiwan a great friend of Panama... Taiwan got involved in Panama, bet on it, and gave us money and support."

While Mulino's government has since dismissed the idea of allowing Taiwan to open a commercial office in Panama, opportunities remain for Central American country to continue exploring and deepening partnerships with Taiwan.

Against Beijing's Wishes, Delegations Continue Visiting Taipei

Unsurprisingly, these visits drew sharp rebukes from Beijing, which continues to oppose any diplomatic contacts between Taiwan and other countries. In response to the Costa Rican intelligence training initiative in Taipei, China's embassy in San Jose issued a statement declaring that "China opposes firmly to any form of official contact between Costa Rica and Taiwan." Meanwhile, while Colombian legislators were visiting Taipei, Colombia's foreign minister met with China's Ambassador to Colombia Zhu Jingyang (朱京阳), and promptly issued a communiqué endorsing the One China Principle. The PRC Embassy in Bogotá reshared that communique on X, and Zhu tweeted that "The issue of Taiwan is an internal Chinese issue and does not allow foreign interference."

In response to the Panamanian parliament's visit to Taiwan, the Chinese Ambassador to Panama went further. The ambassador, Xu Xueyuan (徐学渊), allegedly sent WhatsApp messages to the Panamanian delegates urging them to cancel the trip and warning of "a great negative impact" on bilateral relations.

Despite Beijing's efforts, all three countries completed one or multiple visits, exploring opportunities for deeper cooperation across a wide range of government and economic sectors.

Increasing Alignment with Washington

The significance of these visits, however, go beyond bilateral relations with Beijing and Taipei. Since the first Trump Administration took office in 2017, Washington has consistently sought to counter China's growing influence in Latin America, to include defending Taiwan's diplomatic standing in the region. In March 2020, Trump signed into law the *Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act*, which formally endorses preserving Taiwan's diplomatic allies and encourages the US government to consider "altering" relations with countries whose actions "undermine the security or prosperity or Taiwan."

Meanwhile, in 2025, on his first overseas visit as US Secretary of State, Marco Rubio thanked Guatemala's president for maintaining relations with Taiwan and cautioned the presidents of Panama, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic against aligning with China. In September 2025, he declared that the United States was "committed to countering China's corrupt influence in Central America," and would restrict US visa access to any Central American nation that deep-

ened ties with China. In May 2025, the US Ambassador to Panama, Kevin Marino Cabrera, identified "countering the malign influence of China" as one of the United States' top priorities in Panama. Cabrera also publicly opposed China's attempts to prevent the Panamanian delegation from traveling to Taiwan, commenting that China's embassy "shouldn't be involved in those issues."

For Latin American governments, engaging with Taipei demonstrates alignment with Washington. At a time when the second Trump Administration has prioritized the Western Hemisphere over any other region in its new National Security Strategy, many Latin American governments are betting on Washington.

The main point: Congressional delegations from Costa Rica, Colombia, and Panama visited Taiwan in 2025, meeting with Taiwanese officials and looking to boost economic development through bilateral cooperation. These visits show that even in the absence of formal diplomatic relations—and despite pressure from the PRC—Taiwan can still cultivate meaningful bilateral relationships in Latin America.

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Making Diplomatic Music Through Death Metal

By: Hope Ngo

Hope Ngo has worked for over two decades as a journalist covering regional politics and business for organizations including Bloomberg Television, CNN International, and NBC Asia. She obtained her Master of Social Sciences in Media, Culture, & Creative Cities (with Distinction) from The University of Hong Kong, and is a Salzburg Global Fellow. Ms. Ngo is currently a news anchor at International Community Radio Taipei and is host of the program "Taiwan Talk."

Few were expecting anything out of the ordinary when Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外交部) and the Ministry of Culture (文化部) first unveiled its "Taiwan Culture in Europe 2025" initiative. The program, which ran from September to December 2025, featured about 70 lectures, performances, and exhibitions by notable figures from Taiwan's arts and culture scene. Highlights included the works of Professor Hsieh Sheng-Min (謝省民), whose show, "Gloria: Taiwanese Artist Hsieh Sheng-Min's Religious and HOPE artworks," married Taiwan's folk style with elements of Catholicism. Then there was "100 Treasures, 100 Stories," a groundbreaking exchange of antiquities between Taiwan's National Palace Museum (NPM, 國立故宮博物院) and the National Museum of the Czech Republic, which resulted in the European debut of the NPM's priceless Jadeite Cabbage.

Even though the program made history by introducing NPM artifacts to a new European audience, the programming didn't exactly make waves like another Taiwanese cultural initiative: the "Formosa : Finland : Fest." While its name gave little away, the musical event (also known as "F:F:F") promised to be a milestone in Taiwan's cultural outreach, because it centered on a genre hardly synonymous with diplomacy: death metal.

Rowdy Diplomacy

It may be difficult to reconcile the idea of heavy, aggressive metal music with the more delicate, nuanced language that characterizes traditional diplomatic outreach—but the organizers were not deterred. Formosa : Finland : Fest, which took place on November 27, 2025 in Finland's capital Helsinki, brought some of the biggest names in Taiwan death metal to the Scandinavian country. The lineup included Flesh Juicer, Crescent Lament, and Chthonic—whose lead singer, Freddy Lim Tshiong-Tso (林昶佐), currently serves as Taiwan's Representative to Finland. Taiwan's homegrown bands were joined by Finnish groups Korpiklaani and Lost Society. In an interview with CNA, Lim stated that the event, which saw many of the songs performed in the Taiwanese language, drew "unusually strong participation from Finnish politicians."

The elevation of Taiwan death metal onto the global stage might seem a bit discordant for a genre whose fans and performers are used to occupying the fringes of Taiwan's music society. In an interview with this author, Frank Chu of the Taipei death metal band Second Round pointed out that even though the genre has made waves, "we [metal musicians] are in the minority, you know. The popular music in Taiwan is always pop."

Nonetheless, it made sense that F:F:F was staged in Finland, a country that is arguably the global ground zero for metal music. Jere Tala, Finland's Deputy Representative to Taiwan, told this author that "[Finland] is the best platform to experiment with this new language of diplomacy. It has the highest number of metal bands per capita in the world. We have thousands and thousands of different kind of metal bands. And of course, there's a lots of different subgenres within metal. And for us, metal is definitely not niche—it's mainstream music."

Testing the Island's Metal

Mainstream or not, heavy metal has had a role in Taiwan society for decades—at least since the 1980s, when the band Assassin burst on the scene. As with many fans who view metal as a form of emotional catharsis, musicians like Chu also see the pugnacious tones of death metal as an effective outlet for negative emotions. "Modern people suffer from overwork," said the musician, whose day job is that of a sales representative for the Taiwan branch of a multinational firm. "Some people are frustrated with what our government is doing … so the more frustration we have, the more angry [we are and the more songs we produce]."

But Taiwan's metal scene doesn't just produce music that catalogues society's grievances. Dharma, one of Taiwan's best known metal bands today, marries Buddhist sutras and metal music to create an irresistible sound that its band members say demonstrates acts of devotion to the Buddhist religion. In a 2021 interview with *Buddhist Door*, band founder Jack Tung said, "All of our song lyrics are classic Buddhist mantras. Through our music our audience, our stage crew, or anyone behind their phone/computer screen is blessed by the mantras. Anyone who searches for any of our songs online will inevitably come in contact with Buddhism, and with that we've accomplished our goal."

Spirituality is also a component of the music of Chthonic and Freddy Lim—who likely became Taiwan's coolest diplomatic representative when he went on stage to perform with his band at F:F:F. Lim weaved his trademark metal sound around the concept of reincarnation by telling the story of a man who relives some of Taiwan's most traumatic political events in his summer hit, "Endless Aeons." Lim told this author that the song is a tribute to his grandfather, whom Lim discovered only recently to have been a victim of Taiwan's White Terror martial law era.

In a May 2025 interview with this author's International Community Radio Taipei (ICRT) podcast, Lim shared that "in 2017, most of the political archives were opened by the parliament, by the government, and also most of the archives were put online. So in 2023, I decided to check on my grandfather's names or my relatives names, to see. I was curious to see if there were any names of my family's in the political archives." It was then that Lim discovered that the 228 Incident was more personal than he realized: "I just found out that my grandfather was arrested during the 228 Incident and after he was bailed out, he and his family—which means my mother—they escaped from city to city. They moved a lot. My mother and my aunts didn't know anything about that before I found it."

Image: The band Chthonic (閃靈)*, including Taiwan's representative to Finland Freddy Lim (foreground), performing at the "Formosa:Finland:Fest" in Helsinki (Nov. 27, 2025). (Image source: CNA)*

"Because I care about, [and] I am so close with those victims and work on all those human rights activities… I thought that I was helping others. But after I found out [about my grandfather] there was a different energy driving around in my heart. I want to write a song about this feeling," said Lim.

Heavy Metal, but Light Support

The crossovers between pop culture, history, and metal music in Taiwan has not yet led to more financial support for the fringe music genre—even though the need to support Taiwan's cultural industries was spelled out by then-Vice President Lai Ching-te (賴清德) in 2021. Indeed, the goal of promoting Taiwan's music industries lives within the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (民進黨) "National Project of Hope." And while the government's *Development of the Cultural and Creative Industries Act* (文化創意產業發展法) highlights the need to support 16 different culture-related industries (including music), budding musicians like Chu bemoan a lack of government financial support for metal. This frustration comes even as it may be possible to obtain subsidies for other forms of Taiwanese art and culture.

This oversight could be explained by certain perceptions of the role metal music plays in Taiwan cultural society. Most of the cultural industries outlined in Taiwan's cultural policy can be loosely classified as "high culture"—that is, culture which:

> *"[I]ncludes works that can be appreciated in art museums, are performed by philharmonic orchestras, presented in theaters and operas,*

memorized in schools, and interpreted in institutions of higher education. If popular culture is said to include productions that are quickly consumed and quickly forgotten, high culture is framed as being demanding. Participating in high culture is supposed to be challenging. You have to rise up to the task, and not everyone can. By contrast, popular culture is easy to understand, and as a result, may not need to much energy to cultivate."

But this distinction—and disregard—for popular culture subgenres like metal music will likely need to shift as Taiwan finds itself navigating a more challenging diplomatic space in the face of an aggressive China. There is a need to tell the Taiwan story in a wider variety of ways, in order to appeal to a broader range of voices and people. As the Finnish Deputy Representative to Taiwan Jere Tala pointed out, "you have to be open for different types of exchange, and this is just one of them. So in Finland and Taiwan's case, we already enjoy very warm relations, especially in areas such as technology, innovation, education, and democracy—of course—but this kind of cultural exchange deepens the understanding in a way that politics or economics just alone cannot do. So it definitely reaches and expands the understanding between the two countries."

And if the formula for the Formosa : Finland : Fest can be successfully replicated, the defiant sound of death metal could well become a way for Taiwan to strike a chord with an even wider audience.

The main point: Taiwan's recent Formosa : Finland : Fest death metal concert, staged in Finland, exemplifies a new mode of diplomacy based on music often regarded as a fringe genre. Yet the success of the festival, and its performers, reveals that Taiwan can better tell its story to the world by moving beyond traditional forms of cultural diplomacy.

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One Strait Away: Fujian's Strategic Role in a Taiwan Contingency

By: Emerson Tsui

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Fujian Province would serve as the closest People's Republic of China (PRC) territory to Taiwan during a cross-Strait contingency. In the United States Department of Defense's annual report to Congress, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2024*, the province is mentioned 16 times. The report detailed several People's Liberation Army (PLA) units of strategic significance based in Fujian. Indeed, understanding the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) military installations in Fujian Province is pivotal for predicting the PLA's operational calculus in a potential Taiwan contingency.

Fuzhou and the Eastern Theater Command: A Node of C-3

As a key coastal area facing Taiwan, Fujian hosts large deployments of the People's Liberation Army Ground Force (PLAGF), including infantry, artillery, and missile units. Its capital city, Fuzhou, has been home to the Eastern Theater Command (ETC)'s Ground Force (东部战区陆军机关) since its reformation in 2016. In 2016, the PLA conducted a command reform that replaced the former seven Military Regions (军区)—which were largely administrative and army-centric—with five joint Theater Commands (战区) oriented toward operational warfighting. Under the guiding principle of "the CMC exercises overall command, theater commands conduct operations, and services focus on force development," the reform concentrated command authority while enabling theater-level joint operations. The Eastern Theater Command was explicitly structured to manage contingencies in the Taiwan Strait and adjacent maritime domains.

The new ETC headquarters oversees the PLAGF's 71st Group Army, 72nd Group Army, and 73rd Group Army. Historically, Fuzhou has hosted key PLA headquarters at the provincial and group-army levels, including the Fujian Military District (福建省军区) and major ground force units subordinated to the former Nanjing Military Region, such as the Taiwan-oriented 31st Group Army. Even though these commands did not exercise authority beyond Fujian Province, their location reflected the city's longstanding role in PLA Taiwan-facing military planning. In particular, the distance between Fuzhou (Fujian's capital city) and Taipei is only 110-115 miles (180-184 km) by air.

As a result, the Eastern Theater Command Ground Force Headquarters in Fuzhou would support command, control, and communication (C-3) functions during a Taiwan contingency, specifically in coordination with the Eastern Theater Command Joint Operations Command Center in Nanjing. Consequently, Fu-

zhou would function as a vital supporting command node within the PLA's broader multi-domain joint operations framework (联合作战).

Image: Amphibious landing vehicles operated by the Fujian-based PLA 73rd Group Army conducting training at an unidentified location, July 2021. (Image source: CGTN)

Missile Deterrence: PLA Rocket Force and DF-17 Brigade(s) in Fujian

Open source research has identified at least two PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) units in Fujian's two mountainous county-level cities, Yong'an (25.9414° N, 117.3652° E) and Nanping (26.64° N, 118.17° E). Known as "Eight parts mountain, one part water, one part farmland" (八山一水一分田), Fujian is at least 80 percent mountainous. Such terrain characteristics thus provide concealment for the PLARF nuclear force, enhancing the overall survivability and launch on warning (LOW) capacity of the PRC during a contingency.

Situating the PLARF brigade in Fujian significantly extends the PLA's overall force-projection capacity and the credible threats it can impose on its adversaries. Situated in northwestern Fujian, Nanping is a regional transportation hub with established railway and highway links connecting inland Fujian to coastal areas. This civilian transportation infrastructure enhances the mobility and concealment of nearby PLA Rocket Force units, including the 815th Ballistic Missile Brigade, by facilitating logistical and coordination support under peacetime conditions. Yong'an, located in Fujian's central west region, hosts the PLARF's 614th Brigade that is equipped with the DF-17 (東風-17), the PLARF's latest hypersonic missile capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads. Specifically, the DF-17 is a solid-fueled ballistic missile that employs a hypersonic glide vehicle (HGV) with an irregular trajectory, which significantly increases the difficulty and cost of interception. The high mobility of the DF-17 system, combined with the mountainous terrain in which the 614th Brigade is embedded, significantly enhances both the missile's survivability and strike capacity. This geographic advantage strengthens the PLA's LOW posture by complicating adversary detection, compressing response timelines, and raising interception costs. With a demonstrated range capable of reaching Japan's Kadena Air Base in Okinawa and US facilities on Guam, the DF-17's deployment in Fujian poses credible threats to Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. As a result, Fujian thus contributes to the survivability and responsiveness of the PRC's regional strike forces.

PLA Naval and Air Force Bases in Fujian

As a vital People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) hub, hosting several PLA Navy squadrons, Fujian enhances the PLA's operational advantages in the air and maritime domains—which would be critical to a successful Taiwan operation. The People's Liberation Army Navy Fujian Base (中国人民解放军海军福建基地) is also located in Fuzhou. Deep-water ports in economic hubs—including Xiamen and Quanzhou—provide the PLAN with convenient regional infrastructure and sea access. These installations position Fujian on the frontline of a Taiwan contingency in which joint sea-air domain operations (海空聯合作戰) and joint sea-denial operations (联合海域封控) are indispensable.

In particular, Xiamen port is home to the People's Liberation Army Navy Xiamen Marine Police District (中国人民解放军海军厦门水警区)—as well as Fujian's maritime militia, which operates under the jurisdiction of the PLAN Fujian Base. The port also hosts a "Xiamen-based submarine unit" (潜艇大队) that "safeguards cross-Strait dynamics," as indicated by the official website of the Fujian Provincial Government. Kinmen (Quemoy) County, one of Taiwan's outer islands, sits only 6 miles (10 km) east of Xiamen. Kinmen has been at the forefront of PRC military activity directed at Taiwan since 1949. The city of Xiamen and Chongwu of Quanzhou (崇武，泉州) have been the launch pad for critical PRC-Taiwan conflicts, including the Battle of Guningtou (古寧頭戰役) in 1949, as well as surface engagements with the Republic of China (Taiwan) Navy during the Kuomintang (國民黨) martial law period. These surface warfare engagements, including the Battle of Wuqiu/Eastern of Chongwu (崇武以東海戰 / 烏坵海戰), were part of the ROC's objective to reclaim the mainland, known as Project National Glory.

In addition to naval features, Fujian also hosts critical PLA Air Force (PLAAF) air bases capable of swift sorties to Taiwan. Fujian hosts multiple PLA Air Force (PLAAF) air bases that support aviation brigades tasked with Taiwan-facing operations. These include Longtian Air Base (龙田空军基地) near Fuzhou—widely assessed to be the PLAAF air base closest to Taiwan—as well as Hui'an Air Base (惠安空军基地) in Quanzhou and Shuimen Air Base (水门空军基地). Operationally, these facilities host PLAAF aviation brigades, including the 41st

Aviation Brigade at Wuyishan Airport in Nanping. In addition, several dual-use civilian airfields in cities such as Longyan and Sanming could support surge or dispersal operations during a contingency. Detailed sorties of the PLAAF fighters remain unconfirmed, yet it is understood that those installations serve as forward bases and launchpads for the PLAAF's stealth fighters—especially the J-20—during missions aimed at the mainland of Taiwan. Under favorable aviation conditions, the PLA's J-20 fighter could theoretically reach Taipei in under seven minutes from Shuimen Airbase, compressing Taiwan's detection and reaction window.

Last but not least, the PRC's gray zone tactics, along with its "Joint-Sword" series of exercises (联合利剑系列军演), have involved PLAN and PLAAF bases in Fujian. These activities—including live-fire drills, blockade simulations, and gray-zone pressure—could cross the threshold from coercion into active conflict. Consequently, Fujian's dense network of air, naval, and dual-use infrastructure significantly expands the PLA's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capacity and provides critical forward positioning for operations against Taiwan.

Image: A Sentinel-2 satellite imagery shot of Longtian PLA Air Force base in Fujian (circa 2023). (Images source: Wikimedia Commons)

Non-Military Forces: Coast Guard & Maritime Militia

During a cross-Strait campaign, where the maritime domain is central, Fujian's maritime militia (海上民兵) would play a critical role. In particular, the militia and its related civilian infrastructure can be mobilized to perform various duties, including assisting with a naval blockade, island encirclement, logistics, and transportation. They can perform combatant and noncombatant tasks (e.g., covering and rescuing) within and beyond the nearshore waters of Fujian. In this way, Fujian's maritime militia can critically enhance the PLA's A2/AD capacity. Trained under the People's Armed Forces Departments (人民武装部), the maritime militia comprises local fishermen and noncombatant members of the public, and is capable of rapid mobilization and deployment during a contingency. In practice, Fujian Province has been implementing incentives to strengthen the militia's combatant capacity. During January 2025, the Fujian Government issued "Measures for Guaranteeing Militia Rights and Interests" (福建省民兵权益保障办法). Such measures provide detailed incentives, ranging from financial compensation to various social welfare measures, to promote militia members' performance and morale.

Historically, Fujian served as a Historic Revolutionary Base Area (革命老区) with a robust civilian-military nexus (军民融合), and a frontline area for support traditions (支前传统) and united front work during the early stages of the Chinese Communist Revolution. Specifically, Fujian cities hosting PLA brigades, including Fuzhou, Quanzhou, Xiamen, and Longyan, have consistently been awarded the "Double-Support Model City" (双拥模范城市) designation. This honor aims to incentivize local military-civilian integration efforts.

Traditions and local policy implementation are thus interwoven into the PRC's plan for using Fujian to achieve unification with Taiwan by force. In short, historical heritage and policy implementation in Fujian's civil–military integration adds significant weight to the province's field advantages during a Taiwan contingency.

From Historical Patterns to Trending Dynamics: Fujian in Past Taiwan Strait Crises

Fujian has been an essential launchpad during the past four Taiwan crises, and the PRC's historical attempts to capture Taiwanese outlying islands by force. Xiamen remains the critical launchpad and base for the PLA's recorded operations during the final stages of the Chinese Civil War. Examples include the Battle of Guningtou (1949), the Battle of the Dadan (1950), and other engagements during the First (1954-1955) and Second (1958) Taiwan Crises. Despite the PLA's initial failure to capture Kinmen, Xiamen-based artillery continued intermittent shelling of Kinmen County until 1979. The distance between Xiamen and Kinmen is only 6 miles, making control over Kinmen strategically advantageous for expanding wartime A2/AD coverage.

In addition to the capture of Taiwan's outer islands, Fujian has also served as the launchpad for the PLA's military coercion operations. During the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), the PRC launched DF-15 (東風-15) missiles from Fujian's Yong'an and Nanping to deter Taiwan from declaring independence. Both cities, as previously mentioned, hold PLARF brigades armed with missiles capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads. In the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis following then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taiwan, a live-fire exercise started from Fujian's Pingtan island before being accompanied by a joint

drill simulating a encirclement of Taiwan (合围台岛).

The main point: A Taiwan contingency would begin in Fujian. The province's key military features—the C-3 operational structure, bases, and critical units of the PLAN, PLARF, and PLAAF—attest to this. Historical patterns and recent cross-Strait dynamics have further underscored the province's position as a wartime hub. As a result, Taiwanese defense planners and stakeholders must enhance their monitoring work directed at Fujian.

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