



NHSMUN

Background Guide | *CRISIS: TAIWAN*

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Ming-May Hu

Chris Talamo

Althea Turley

Hello Delegates,

Welcome to the Taiwanese Cabinet - my name is Avril Wang Brown and I am thrilled to be your Session 1 Director!

I am currently in my second year studying political science and economics at UC Davis. At school, I work in the financial aid office and the tutoring center. I'm also involved in the international relations club and prelaw community! Outside of academics, I sing in a band back home in the San Francisco Bay Area, and I also love cats, concerts, crochet, and Chinese variety shows. NHSMUN was my first-ever conference back in high school, and I fell in love with the activity. I attended a total of three NHSMUNs as a delegate and enjoyed my time at the Hilton so much I decided to come back as a staffer last year.

Regardless of where you are on your MUN journeys, I hope that you guys use this committee as a chance to learn and grow. In my opinion, MUN is one of the most invaluable activities you can do in high school. Beyond just public speaking and research, it teaches you how to read a room, network, adapt to unexpected circumstances, negotiate, compromise, and influence others. Whether you realize it or not, these skills carry over to countless aspects of your life, and building them can help you go far even beyond high school.

Tipping over a single domino can lead to a chain reaction in international politics, and I look forward to seeing how you all respond to all the challenges we will be throwing at you. John and I chose to center our committee around Taiwan because of how complicated, fascinating, and relevant the internal politics of the island are to the relationship between Taiwan and the mainland as well as the international order. you will inevitably be dealing with some sensitive issues in these committees, and while specialized committees are of course silly and fun, I urge you all to treat the topic and the people involved with the sensitivity and respect that they deserve.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to reach out to John or me, and we can't wait to see you soon. The future of Taiwan is in your hands!

Best,

Avril Wang Brown
Taiwanese Cabinet Director, Session I
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Hey Delegates,

Welcome again to the Taiwanese Cabinet. My name is John Ward, and I am excited to be your Session 2 Director.

I am a sophomore at American University, where I study political science. On campus I write for the undergraduate law review, swim on the club team, and help run a joint crisis committee at AmeriMUNC, our annual conference. Outside of school, I love to cook, and I spend a lot of time listening to super underground and niche artists like Laufey and Mitski. I also enjoy exploring Washington, DC, and finding new spots around the city. And of course, I am also a big fan of Avril's cat.

I started Model UN my junior year of high school and fell in love with it. I attended NHSMUN twice as a delegate and came back last year as an assistant director in DISEC. Model UN has a place for everyone. No matter what you want to study or do in life, it can help you grow. It builds skills in research, speaking, writing, and teamwork. Whether you continue with Model UN after high school, the work you do here will stay with you. Every conference helps you grow. Even if this is your very first one, you are already building skills in communication, research, and writing that will serve you long after NHSMUN's amazing closing ceremony.

This committee will give you the chance to explore Taiwan's politics and how they connect to the world. I want to encourage you to enjoy the process. There is no single "correct" way to do NHSMUN. If you love research and writing, dive deep into the topics and strong position papers. If you love the theater of Model UN, feel free to create some clever hooks for your speeches. Take time to dig into the research and think about the different perspectives you come across. Write with curiosity, and do not be afraid to take risks or try creative ideas. Be open to new ways of solving problems.

I am looking forward to meeting you all and seeing the work you do. Please reach out if you have any questions. Avril and I would be thrilled to help with anything you might be unsure about.

Best,

John Ward

Taiwanese Cabinet Director, Session II

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A NOTE ON RESEARCH AND PREPARATION

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to the conference.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#), [Advanced Delegate Guide](#), [Research Guide](#), and [Rules of Procedure Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a role, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are both prepared to debate throughout the committee. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections.

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's role. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic. It is best to focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Character Policy – This section should discuss the character's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the character's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and 12 point font size. This is a maximum; **3–5 pages per topic is often a suitable length**. The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned individual and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for submitting position papers on or before **February 20, 2026**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 30, 2026**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference. Instructions on how to submit position papers will be shared directly with faculty advisors.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at nhsmun@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

COMMITTEE HISTORY

The Executive Yuan, also known as the Taiwanese Cabinet, is the highest administrative body of the Taiwanese government. The Cabinet, formed on October 25, 1928, has jurisdiction over the government of the Republic of China (ROC).¹ Concluding the Chinese Civil War (1927-1949), the CCP captured Beijing on October 1, 1949, with leader Mao Zedong officially proclaiming the People's Republic of China, officially dissolving the ROC Executive Yuan. After losing the capital, the ROC retreated from mainland China to the island of Taiwan under Nationalist led Chiang Kai-shek. As a remnant of the Chinese mainland 100 years ago, Taiwan's official name is the Republic of China as opposed to the mainland's People's Republic of China.² In 1987 came Taiwan's political shift from a military dictatorship to a democracy, leading to the first direct presidential election in 1996.

The current Executive Yuan, re-formed on March 10, 1950. As part of the five branches of the central Taiwanese government, the Executive Yuan serves to formulate and implement policies.³ The Council is composed of the Premier, Vice Premier, Cabinet Ministers, Chairs of Commissions, and Ministers without Portfolio; most cabinet members are appointed by the President. The current cabinet, led by Cho Jung-tai,⁴ has been controlled by the incumbent since 2024. The president and vice president, after being elected, appoint the premier, who then appoints the heads of ministries, commissions and agencies under the Executive Yuan. As of recent restructuring, the cabinet has been reduced from 37 to 30 organizations, consisting of 14 ministers, 9 councils, 3 independent agencies, and 4 other organizations.⁵ This was done in an effort to improve efficiency and effectiveness, proving the continued transformation of this growing country.

In the 75 year history of the Executive Yuan, the Cabinet has seen shifts in political leadership, social movements, and changes in the Taiwanese identity. During Taiwan's martial law period (1949-1987), the Executive Yuan carried out decrees by the ROC Armed Forces of the ruling KMT Party. Under Article 58, the Constitution gives the Executive Yuan the power to declare martial law, war, and treaties, without being checked by the Legislative Yuan. Following the end of the White Terror movement, the Executive Yuan transformed to a more transparent council, facilitating daily affairs and restoring faith in its citizens. The sunflower movement, legalization of gay marriage, indigenous rights

Taiwan as of now still remains the democracy it set out to be, striving to build a free and equal society. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has been the ruling party since 2016. During the 2024 general elections, the DPP lost majority control of the Legislative Yuan but remained the incumbent administration over the Presidency and central government, under President Lai. As Chinese encroachment grows, the governance of Taiwan remains in limbo between the KMT led Pan-blue Legislative coalition and the DPP controlled Executive Yuan, raising pressing questions surrounding the sovereignty and future of the island-nation.

¹ The Executive Yuan, R.O.C. (Taiwan), "Executive Yuan," english.president.gov.tw, n.d., <https://english.president.gov.tw/POP/243>.

² John C. Copper, "Taiwan - Government and Society," Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d., September 7, 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Taiwan/Government-and-society>.

³ The Executive Yuan, R.O.C. (Taiwan), "Executive Yuan," Structure and Functions, December 1, 2011, <https://english.ey.gov.tw/Page/E43650B2CB14861B>.

⁴ CNA English, "Cabinet Reshuffle to Be Finalized This Week: Premier - Focus Taiwan," Focus Taiwan - CNA English News, August 26, 2025, <https://focustaiwan.tw/politics/202508260012>.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "History of Taiwan," Government Portal of Republic of China, Taiwan, March 6, 2019, https://www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_4.php



Threats to Taiwan's Sovereignty and Stability

Photo Credit: Uwe Aranas

Taiwan's democracy is experiencing one of its most volatile periods in modern history. In January 2024, the people voted President Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) into office. However, an opposing coalition soon won the Legislative Yuan majority. This coalition was composed of the Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People's Party (TPP). Almost immediately, lawmakers pushed through procedural and investigative overhauls and budget reallocations with limited debate, fueling concerns that party-line votes were drowning out public input.

Protests followed. In May 2024, the Bluebird Movement

drew nightly crowds and spread nationwide.¹ Some bills were briefly delayed, including cuts affecting the Coast Guard and oversight bodies, but debate resumed and

measures passed. By late 2024, the movement's focus widened to recall campaigns, culminating in a wave of petitions through mid-2025 that resembled a parallel election season.² These changes were labeled a "legislative coup" by its critics.³ These reforms came after months of legislative gridlock and protest. Supporters claimed they were necessary to correct executive overreach. In December 2024, the Legislative Yuan passed amendments to the Act Governing the Allocation of Government Expenditures, which redirected roughly TWD 375 billion (about USD 11.5 billion) from the central government to local governments, reducing funding for defense and oversight agencies. The Executive Yuan appealed these changes to the Constitutional Court, arguing that the legislature had violated the separation of powers. However, the

legislature also raised the number of justices needed to hold a quorum from eight to ten. They also blocked confirmation of new judges. This effectively froze the court's ability to stop legislative overreach.⁴

On top of these internal struggles, the threat from China is increasing. Over the past year, Beijing has intensified political warfare against Taiwan. Sponsored hackers have targeted campaign staff with phishing attacks designed to infiltrate internal computer systems. Businesses that support democratic reforms have been threatened. Even overt military threats have been made against the island. Yet, Taiwanese citizens have repeatedly shown their willingness to push back. Whether by protesting in Taipei or organizing petitions, when people feel their rights slipping away, they will fight to defend them.

TOPIC BACKGROUND

Chinese Civil War and Cross-Strait Relations

For much of its known history, Taiwan has been ruled by colonial powers. European powers,

including the Dutch and Spanish, once held influence over the small island. However, the Qing dynasty of mainland China eventually took control over Taiwan in 1683 and maintained control for over 200 years.⁵ In 1894, the Qing

dynasty went to war with the Empire of Japan in the First Sino-Japanese War. The Qing dynasty lost in 1895, and the Treaty of Shimonoseki ended the war and gave control over Taiwan to Japan.⁶

1 Sonia Schlesinger, "Who Are The 'Bluebird Movement' Protestors?" *The New Lens*, May 30, 2024, international.thenewslens.com/article/187007

2 Hui, Karen, and Steve Zhu. 2025. "Taiwan Rocked by Mass Recall Battle Between Leading Political Parties." Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, May 19, 2025. www.asiapacific.ca/insights/taiwan-rocked-mass-recall-battle-between-leading-political-parties.

3 Rupert Wingfield-Hayes, "Taiwan braces for fresh protests over controversial new law," BBC, June 21, 2024, www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd118zly349o.

4 Brian Hioe, "Despite Protests, Taiwan's KMT, TPP Pass Controversial Bills to Expand Legislative Powers," *The Diplomat*, May 24th, 2025, thediplomat.com/2024/05/despite-protests-taiwans-kmt-tpp-pass-controversial-bills-to-expand-legislative-powers/

5 "HISTORY," Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed July 25, 2025, www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_3.php.

6 Republic of China (Taiwan), "HISTORY."

However, Taiwan's history is deeply tied to mainland China. Throughout Qing control, foreign powers continued to expand their influence throughout East Asia. Countries like the United Kingdom and France imposed unequal treaties on China. This increased trade, protected Christian missionaries, and allowed foreign powers to build infrastructure that the Qing government could not control.⁷ Great Britain was also able to profit heavily from the opium trade. The massive imports of opium drained China's resources and economy.⁸ In response, the Qing Dynasty attempted to ban opium and cut off the trade. This led to wars with the UK, both of which the dynasty lost. These defeats, along with widespread corruption and domestic unrest, fueled major rebellions like the Taiping and Boxer uprisings. By 1911, these events culminated in the collapse of the Qing dynasty and ended thousands of years of imperial rule.⁹

The fall of the Qing dynasty began a chaotic time called the Warlord Era. The period lasted from 1916 to 1928. During this time, there was no strong unified government in China. Instead,

many local leaders and military commanders fought for control over different parts of China. Each warlord controlled their own region and operated like an independent country. They would collect their own taxes, raise their own armies, and fight one another. These constant conflicts led to instability and hardship for nearly everyone in China.¹⁰ During this time, two important political groups emerged, seeking to unify China under their rule.

The first group was the Kuomintang (KMT), or the Nationalist Party. It was founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1912. Sun Yat-sen is known as the "Father of the Nation" in China. He had three main principles: nationalism, democracy, and livelihood. Nationalism aimed to make China strong and independent. Democracy was meant to give greater power to the people. Livelihood meant improving the lives of ordinary people. In 1925, Sun Yat-sen died and was replaced by Chiang Kai-shek as the KMT's main leader. Chiang Kai-shek was a military leader who wanted to unify China by force.¹¹

The second group was the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), founded in 1921. The CCP was inspired by Marxist ideas. They aimed to create a classless society where all people were equal, with a focus on the rights of peasants and workers. They believed that the working class should overthrow the rich landowners and factory owners.¹² The CCP and KMT had radically different ideas for how China should be governed. The KMT wanted a capitalist system with a strong government. Meanwhile, the CCP pushed for a more communal society without private property.¹³

At first, the two parties worked together against a common enemy. They formed what was called the "First United Front" in 1924. Their goal was to defeat the warlords and unify China under one government.¹⁴ They shared resources and military training. The Soviet Union assisted both parties. Together, they launched the North Expedition in 1926. This was a military campaign to defeat the warlords and bring the country under KMT control. However, the alliance between the CCP and KMT was uneasy. Each group had severe disagreements over China's

7 Office of the Historian, Shared Knowledge Services, Bureau of Administration, United States Department of State, "The Opening to China Part I: the First Opium War, the United States, and the Treaty of Wangxia, 1839–1844," accessed August 28, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/china-1.

8 United States Department of State, "The Opening to China Part I: The First Opium War, the United States, and the Treaty of Wangxia."

9 "The Chinese Revolution of 1911," United States of America Department of State, accessed July 25, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/chinese-rev.

10 "Warlord," Britannica, accessed July 25, 2025, www.britannica.com/topic/warlord-Chinese-history.

11 Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy, "The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party," University of Warwick, June 27, 2023, accessed August 28, 2025, warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/research/centres/cage/news/27-06-23-the_rise_of_the_chinese_communist_party.

12 Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy, "The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party."

13 Centre for Competitive Advantage in the Global Economy, "The Rise of the Chinese Communist Party."

14 Zachary Fillingham, "Backgrounder: A Brief History of China's United Front," Geopolitical Monitor, March 22, 2019, www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/backgrounder-a-brief-history-of-chinas-united-front.

future. As the Northern Expedition succeeded and the KMT gained more power, Chiang Kai-shek became increasingly suspicious of the Communists. He feared the CCP's growing influence among the workers and peasants. Eventually, on April 12, 1927, Chiang Kai-shek launched a violent crackdown against the Communists.¹⁵ This became known as the Shanghai Massacre. Thousands of communists and their supporters were killed.¹⁶ This attack officially ended the First United Front. Although the warlords had not been fully defeated at this point, the KMT now controlled much of central and southern China.

Between 1930 and 1934, communists successfully fought off four military encirclement campaigns using tactics of guerilla warfare. However, the communist party faced a large military disadvantage.

The KMT Nationalists were better armed and had more forces. This caused the communist forces to suffer losses and nearly get destroyed in 1934. The remaining forces fled, and Mao Zedong led them on a historic journey known as the Long March. On this march, the communist forces crossed 18 mountain ranges and 24 rivers. They fought nationalists along the way. This helped turn



Kuomintang leader Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum in Beijing Xishan Temple of Azure Clouds, July 6, 1928 (Credit: Republic of China government)

public sentiment in favor of the communists and inspired many young Chinese to join their fighting effort in the late 1930s and early 1940s.¹⁷ Open fighting soon began again between the KMT and CCP, which would mark the start of the Chinese Civil War.

However, a new outside threat to China would force both sides to unite again. During World War II, Japan invaded and occupied China from 1937 to 1945. Japan was a powerful enemy, and its invasion was brutal. Japanese forces committed many atrocities and occupied large parts of China.¹⁸

To fight this common enemy, the KMT and CCP formed a temporary alliance known as the "Second United Front."¹⁹ They fought together against the Japanese invaders, though cooperation was often limited because each held a deep distrust of the other. The war with Japan was long and devastating for China. It weakened the KMT government significantly, since they bore the brunt of the fighting against Japan's main forces.

Additionally, the KMT's government faced many problems, including suffering from widespread corruption.²⁰ Officials often stole

¹⁵ "The Shanghai Massacre," Alpha History, accessed July 25, 2025, alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/shanghai-massacre.

¹⁶ "The Chinese Communist Party," Alpha History, accessed July 25, 2025, [alphahistory.com/chinese-communist-party](https://alphahistory.com/chineserevolution/chinese-communist-party).

¹⁷ "Long March," Britannica, accessed August 16, 2025, www.britannica.com/event/Long-March.

¹⁸ "Civil War of China: Chinese Communist Party vs. Kuomintang," Pacific Atrocities Education, accessed July 25, 2025, www.pacificatrocities.org/blog/civil-war-of-china-chinese-communist-party-vs-kuomintang.

¹⁹ "The Chinese Revolution of 1949," Office of the Historian, accessed July 25, 2025, history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev.

²⁰ Aris Teon, "Why Did Chiang Kai-shek Lose China? The Guomindang Regime And The Victory of the Chinese Communist Party," *China Journal*, china-journal.org/2018/02/26/why-did-chiang-kai-shek-lose-china-the-guomindang-regime-and-the-victory-of-the-chinese-communist-party/.

money and resources, which angered the public. The KMT leadership also made poor military decisions, underestimating the communists' strength and popular support. The economy was struggling badly, leading to hyperinflation where money quickly lost its value. Prices for food and basic goods skyrocketed. This made life unbearable for many Chinese civilians. As a result, many people lost trust in the KMT government. Many KMT soldiers also had low morale. Many surrendered or switched sides to the communists. The KMT's reliance on fixed defensive positions and conventional warfare also proved less effective against the CCP's mobile tactics.²¹

As the war continued, the communist forces grew stronger. They launched major offensives, such as the Liaoshen Campaign, the Huaihai Campaign, and the Pingjin Campaign, in late 1948 and early 1949. Each of these campaigns resulted in decisive battles where the Communists defeated large numbers of KMT troops. KMT forces would often leave their equipment behind, which would then be taken by the CCP forces and repurposed for future battles. The CCP forces won major battles and would capture large cities like Beijing, Tianjin, and Nanjing, along with vast territories. The KMT forces were pushed back and continued to lose ground and

popular support. By late 1949, the Communists had defeated the KMT and taken control of almost all of mainland China.

After losing the war, the KMT government, along with its military and about two million refugees, fled to the island of Taiwan. This was a massive exodus of people, including soldiers, government officials, businessmen, and intellectuals. They left the mainland in a hurry, taking whatever they could. Once in Taiwan, they established a new base of power. The government of the

Many people lost trust in the KMT government. Many KMT soldiers also had low morale. Many surrendered or switched sides to the communists.

Republic of China (ROC) moved its capital to Taipei, Taiwan.

Martial Law

After losing the civil war on the mainland, the KMT government and its followers arrived on Taiwan. This was an enormous move, bringing with them not just soldiers but also government officials, businessmen, and many ordinary people who supported

the KMT. They brought the entire government structure of the ROC to Taiwan. They set up their new capital in Taipei and made it the temporary capital of the ROC. Even though they were now based only in Taiwan, the KMT still firmly claimed to be the true and only legitimate government of all China, including the mainland. They strongly believed that they would return to the mainland one day and take back control from the communists. This belief was central to their rule on Taiwan.

Even before the ROC government fully relocated to Taiwan, conditions on the island were difficult for the people. Corruption, rising unemployment, and inflation were just a few of the problems people faced. The government strictly controlled the economy of Taiwan through the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau. This agency regulated the sale of products such as tobacco, alcohol, and camphor. The Bureau was very strict in its policies, which would hurt many small businesses and led to rising frustration with the government.

These tensions exploded in February 1947. A fight between Bureau agents and a cigarette vendor in Taipei escalated when soldiers assaulted her and opened fire on bystanders, killing one.²² The next day, February 28, an organized protest of 2,000 people marched to the Bureau to demand justice. They were met by the military, and

21 Larry M. Wortzel, Military Mobilization in Communist China, *Land Warfare Paper* 136," Association of the United States Army, December 18, 2020, www.ausa.org/publications/military-mobilization-communist-china.

22 "The 228 Incident: History, Memorialization, and Collective Memory," Taiwan Center for Security Studies, accessed July 26, 2025, taiwanccss.org/the-228-incident-history-memorialization-and-collective-memory/.

the protest turned violent. Several dozen people were injured or killed in the crackdown by government soldiers.²³ This was known as the “228 Incident,” named after the date of the incident, February 28.²⁴ This acted as a starting point for the frustration already growing across the island. It began a series of protests and riots over the coming weeks to demand that the government make changes to restore the people’s rights. This led Chiang Kai-shek of the KMT to send the army to Taiwan while the ROC was on the mainland. Taiwan governor Chen Yi made it illegal to be a part of any groups calling for reform. Martial law was briefly declared before the crackdown halted. Over 3,000 people were killed by the military during this time.²⁵ However, other estimates suggest that the real number of deaths may be closer to 10,000.²⁶ This set a precedent for the use of martial law to keep Taiwan in order.

To keep strong control over the island and prepare for a possible return to the mainland, the KMT government declared martial law on May 19th, 1949.²⁷ The declaration was known as the “Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion.”

It was put in place even before the main retreat from the mainland was fully complete.²⁸ Martial law meant that the military would take over the government’s day-to-day operations. The government said this was necessary because of the ongoing threat from the Communist Party on the mainland. They feared a Communist invasion of Taiwan. They also wanted to prevent any internal unrest, instability, or spying by Communist agents. They aimed to create a stable and secure base on the island.²⁹

Although it was meant to be temporary, martial law remained in effect for 38 years, until July 15, 1987. This made it one of the longest periods of martial law in modern history. During these decades, many basic freedoms were severely restricted for everyone living on Taiwan. There was no freedom of speech. Opinions against the KMT government were suppressed, and all public gatherings were strictly controlled. Newspapers, magazines, and books were heavily censored. Any content seen as critical of the KMT was banned. Writers, artists, and academics had to be cautious about what they said or produced. People could not form new political parties

to challenge the KMT’s rule. The KMT was the only major political party allowed to operate freely and control the political scene. Other groups that tried to organize faced immediate suppression. An example of this took place in 1979. The KMT cracked down on a growing pro-democracy demonstration. They arrested and imprisoned the protest leaders to prevent potential political opposition.³⁰ This series of arrests and crackdowns would later be known as the Formosa Incident.

This period of strict control is often called the “White Terror.” Red was commonly associated with Communism during this time, so white became a symbol of anti-Communism. Like its name suggests, the White Terror was a time characterized by strict anti-Communist policies. The government actively suppressed anyone suspected of being a Communist sympathizer or an opponent of the KMT. The “White Terror” was a systematic campaign of arrests, imprisonment, and executions.³¹ During this time, the government relied heavily on secret police groups, like the Taiwan Garrison Command. They also used military courts to arrest, detain, and even execute people suspected of

23 “Executive Yuan’s ‘February 28 Incident Research Report’ Summary,” Memorial Foundation of 228, accessed July 25, 2025, www.228.org.tw/en/the228incident.

24 “White Terror Period,” *National Human Rights Museum*, accessed July 25th, 2025, www.nhrm.gov.tw/w/nhrmEN/White_Terror_Period.

25 “The 228 Incident: History, Memorialization, and Collective Memory,”

26 “Executive Yuan’s ‘February 28 Incident Research Report’ Summary,”

27 Mark Harrison, “The End of Martial Law: An Important Anniversary for Taiwan,” *The Interpreter*, July 13th, 2017, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/end-martial-law-important-anniversary-taiwan.

28 “Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion (1972),” Archived text on Wikisource, accessed August 7th, 2025, [en.wikisource.org/wiki/Temporary_Provisions_Effective_During_the_Period_of_Communist_Rebellion_\(1972\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Temporary_Provisions_Effective_During_the_Period_of_Communist_Rebellion_(1972)).

29 “White Terror Period,” *National Human Rights Museum*.

30 “Formosa Incident,” *OfTaiwan*, accessed August 7th, 2025, oftaiwan.org/history/white-terror/formosa-incident/

31 “White Terror Period,” *National Human Rights Museum*.



Woodcut: The Terrible Inspection (White Terror) (Credit: Huang Rong-can)

opposing the regime.³² This created an atmosphere of deep fear and silence across the island. People were afraid to speak out, criticize the government, or even discuss sensitive political topics, fearing they might be reported. Many people were imprisoned and killed, and some people simply vanished without a trace. Many of these people were suspected Communists, but there were also political figures and normal citizens. The death toll from this era is estimated to be between 10,000 and 30,000.³³

Under martial law, the KMT held very tight control over all aspects of society. They controlled the military, the police, and the entire education system. Schools taught a curriculum that emphasized

Chinese nationalism, loyalty to the ROC government, and the KMT. They taught students the CCP government on the mainland was illegitimate and dangerous. They claimed they were a corrupt regime that kept its people impoverished.³⁴ The KMT was no longer just a political party; it was deeply integrated into the state. Taiwan could be described as a “party-state.” The KMT’s goal was to maintain absolute stability and prepare Taiwan to be a strong, anti-Communist base for retaking the mainland.

Alongside this strict political control, the KMT also focused heavily on economic development. They implemented land reforms in the early 1950s. These reforms

helped improve the lives of farmers and reduced social unrest. Taiwan began to build its industries with a shift from agriculture to manufacturing. The government supported industries like textiles, plastics, and electronics. This brought significant economic stability and growth to the island. This would be referred to as part of the “Taiwan Economic Miracle.” However, this impressive economic progress happened hand-in-hand with the strict political control of martial law.

In the years following 1949, the ROC government on Taiwan was seen by many countries as the official representative of China. The ROC held China’s seat in the United Nations (UN) Security Council for years, as it was in power when the UN was founded. However, both the CCP-led People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the KMT-led ROC government maintained that they were the sole legitimate government of China. The United States and many of its allies strongly supported the ROC’s claim. It saw the ROC as a key partner against communism during the Cold War and provided significant military and economic aid.

This international recognition began to change as more countries started to acknowledge the PRC in Beijing. The PRC’s authority over mainland China and its trading

³² “Security Office, Taiwan Garrison Command,” *Taiwan Cultural Memory Bank*, accessed August 7, 2025, tcmb.culture.tw/zh-tw/detail?indexCode=Culture_Place&id=301591

³³ Huang, Yong-Yu. “White Terror.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, August 31, 2025. www.britannica.com/event/White-Terror-Taiwan.

³⁴ Yu Bai and Yanjun Li, “Good Bye Chiang Kai-shek? The Long-Lasting Effects of Education under the Authoritarian Regime in Taiwan,” *Economics of Education Review*, October 2020, www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272775720305306

position were becoming hard to ignore. A major turning point came in 1971, when the United Nations voted to remove the ROC from its seat and give the PRC the role as the representative of China.³⁵ This was a huge blow to the ROC government. It indicated that international opinion was shifting and leading to a rapid decline in the number of countries officially recognizing Taipei. Following this, the United States also began to rethink its approach. This would result in President Richard Nixon making a historic visit to Beijing in 1972. This signaled a move toward establishing full diplomatic ties with the PRC and eventually ending official recognition of the ROC government on Taiwan.

Protests and Youth Resistance Movements

While Taiwan was under the KMT's military rule, civil society and dissent were heavily suppressed. Independent political and student organizing became illegal. All of that began to change around 1979, when the Taiwanese people started a new form of organized efforts to challenge military rule. Individuals began to create their own news outlets outside the government's control. This helped create an alternative to KMT government

propaganda. The most popular of these citizen-created news outlets was the Formosa Magazine.³⁶ The Formosa Magazine took an active stance against the oppression in Taiwan. They spoke out against the unopposed KMT rule and called for restored freedom of the press.³⁷ With these small civil resistance movements, individuals began organizing and building a civil society within Taiwan.

The Republic of China would continue to target Taiwanese intellectuals, using exile, blackmail, and murder. In response, the Formosa Magazine prepared a rally to celebrate International Human Rights Day on December 10th of 1979. While the group applied for permits to get permission from the government to assemble, all their applications were denied. The government also issued a curfew for the day, banning public assemblies. Despite the government's efforts, the group decided to continue with the rally, peacefully protesting the government. While the group peacefully assembled in Kaohsiung City, Taiwanese riot police began to form around the crowd. The police force later hurled tear gas into the crowd and approached the rally with riot shields. The protestors at the rally fought back against the police, and the government arrested individuals for their involvement

in the illegal public assembly. This incident became known as the Kaohsiung Incident.³⁸ While many protestors were detained, the movement succeeded in its goals. The Kaohsiung Incident was the first civil movement in modern Taiwan history and sparked a movement to fight against military rule. Taiwanese people began to get more invested in Taiwanese politics. Even more, the incident drew international attention to the Kuomintang's actions. The international community became more critical of the Republic of China's human rights abuses. Several US senators spoke out and criticized the imprisonment of opposition party leaders along with the continued implementation of martial law.³⁹ This incident helped lay the foundation for Taiwan's democracy and marked the rebirth of Taiwanese civil society.

By the mid-1980s, Taiwan's growing informal civil society and increasing public pressure for reform made the government realize that the current system of authoritarian rule was unsustainable. In 1987, martial law was finally lifted, and all laws to increase executive branch power were removed.⁴⁰ This came after three decades of explosive economic growth, Taiwan's declining status in the international

³⁵ United Nations General Assembly, "Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations," Resolution 2758, October 25, 1971, digitallibrary.un.org/record/192054?ln=en&cv=pdf

³⁶ "Formosa Incident," *OFTAIWAN*, accessed July 25th, 2025, oftaiwan.org/history/white-terror/formosa-incident.

³⁷ James Carter, "The Formosa Incident: The protest that sparked Taiwan's democracy," *The China Project*, December 7, 2022, thechinaproject.com/2022/12/07/the-formosa-incident-the-protest-that-sparked-taiwans-democracy/.

³⁸ "Formosa Incident,"

³⁹ Gerrit Van Der Wees, "The Formosa Incident: A Look Back," *Taipei Times*, December 10, 2019, www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2019/12/10/2003727276.

⁴⁰ "White Terror Period," *National Human Rights Museum*.

community, and the resurgence of political activism. With these reforms, the Taiwanese gained much more freedom and began to build a stronger independent civil society.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the ban on independent news publications was lifted in 1988. This caused the number of newspapers to rise from 31 heavily censored and government-controlled newspapers to 126 newspapers at the end of the year. This also created greater competition. Newspapers were forced to put in more effort to provide complete and accurate information to their readers.⁴²

This opened up more formal channels for political organization. Massive social movements began to form in the coming years. The first of these movements was the Wild Lily Student Movement. This movement began to form in 1990, when the National Assembly attempted to pass a bill extending the terms of representatives from six to nine years. This prompted widespread public discontent against the parliament. To protest the government's antidemocratic methods, thousands of protestors occupied Liberty Square. The protestors called for direct presidential elections, as well as greater civil and political freedoms for Taiwan. Their demands were

met by the government, and the proposed bill never made it to a vote.⁴³

These protests became a key turning point that helped Taiwan's political environment break away from its authoritarian past. To combat the existing one-party system, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was formed in 1986 as an opposition party to the KMT. At the time, the party's founding was considered an illegal act. However, the DPP launched a series of movements to help restore the people's rights and establish democratic institutions.⁴⁴ A constitutional convention in 1992 enabled constitutional reform, and Taiwan hosted its first multi-party democratic presidential election in 1996.⁴⁵ The KMT incumbent, Lee Teng-hui, won, but it was by a small margin of 54 percent of the vote. However, his victory over the DPP was heavily influenced by the Chinese military launching ballistic missiles into Taiwan's territorial waters days before the election. In this time of perceived crisis, many supported the more entrenched and experienced KMT. This is supported by the idea that an estimated 15 percent of Lee Teng-hui's 54 percent victory came from registered DPP voters.⁴⁶ Four years later, the 2000 presidential

election marked the more dramatic shift that reformers hoped for. DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian won with 39 percent of the vote after the KMT split the vote with a moderate independent. This election ended the KMT's decades-long hold on the presidency. Chen's victory was a milestone in Taiwan's democratic consolidation and signaled a new era of multiparty competition.⁴⁷

The next major social movement to sweep over Taiwan began in 2008. This was a time of economic and political tensions between China and Taiwan. Many in Taiwan were uncomfortable with their economic and trade dependency on China. Some were supportive of integration. They believed it would lead to increased cooperation and stability. Meanwhile, others were concerned that economic interdependence would lead to greater political influence from China over Taiwan. They believed this would ultimately threaten Taiwan's sovereignty and democratic values.

In 2008, the head of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits visited Taiwan. This was the first time in Taiwanese history that such a high-ranking Chinese official visited Taiwan. This caused significant backlash as the public was concerned about

41 The Interpreter, "The End of Martial Law: An Important Anniversary for Taiwan."

42 Han Cheung, "Taiwan in Time: Unleashing the Media Free-For-All," *Taipei Times*, December 29, 2019, www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2019/12/10/2003727276.

43 Han Cheung, "Taiwan in Time: Life After the Wild Lily,"

44 "Founding of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party," 8964museum.com, accessed July 20, 2025, 8964museum.com/time/en/t-b08-002/.

45 The Interpreter, "The End of Martial Law: An Important Anniversary for Taiwan."

46 Bellows, Thomas J. "The March 1996 Elections in the Republic of China on Taiwan," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* (Vol. 3, No. 2), October 1996.

47 "The Wild Strawberry Movement: The Most Direct Predecessor of the Sunflower Movement?" *The Daybreak Magazine*, July 25, 2017, daybreak.newbloommag.net/2017/07/25/wild-strawberry-movement.

the implications of President Ma Ying-jeou growing ties with China.⁴⁸ To protest the visit and the pro-China presidential administration, students engaged in peaceful protests. Their protests culminated in a movement known as the Wild Strawberry Movement. The “Strawberry Generation” was a nickname for young Taiwanese born in the 80s and 90s.⁴⁹ It originally implied they were fragile. These students reclaimed the term, adding “Wild” to assert they were not fragile but resilient, calling back to the Wild Lily movement.⁵⁰ The KMT Ma Ying-jeou administration responded to this movement by restricting protests through the controversial Parade and Assembly Act. This enraged Taiwanese people, who saw the act as a clear violation of their right to peaceful assembly.⁵¹ Thus, activists staged a month-long occupation of public spaces at universities, parks, and public spaces across Taiwan in response.⁵² Unlike previous movements, the Wild Strawberry Movement was mainly organized online on Internet and Bulletin Board Systems. It mobilized participants through social media to communicate their messages directly to the public. This marked a shift in how social movements were organized in



Wild Strawberries Movement, 2008 (Credit: juanchienhan)

Taiwan. The Wild Strawberry Movement became a catalyst for advocacy groups to assemble to address a range of social issues, such as environmental protections and human rights. It also represented a trend towards broader collective activism.⁵³

Towards the end of Ma Ying-jeou's second term in 2014, the KMT once again became embroiled in controversy. The KMT had attempted to forcibly pass the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) in the Legislative Yuan without

proper review. The CSSTA would strengthen economic ties with China by opening up eighty sectors of China's economy to Taiwanese investments and sixty-four sectors of Taiwan's economy to Chinese investment.⁵⁴ While the bill was promoted as being beneficial for Taiwan's economy, many were critical of the bill. They believed that increased economic interdependence would have negative implications for Taiwan's freedom of expression, national security, and sovereignty. However, more than the bill itself, what

48 “The Wild Strawberry Movement: The Most Direct Predecessor of the Sunflower Movement?” *The Daybreak Magazine*, July 25, 2017, daybreak.newbloommag.net/2017/07/25/wild-strawberry-movement/.

49 “The Wild Strawberry Movement: The Most Direct Predecessor of the Sunflower Movement?” *The Daybreak Magazine*.

50 “Taiwanese student sit-in for human rights (The Wild Strawberry Movement), 2008” Swarthmore College Global Nonviolent Action Database, accessed July 24, 2025, nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/taiwanese-student-sit-human-rights-wild-strawberry-movement-2008.

51 Alison Hsiao, “Assembly and Parade Act Scrutinized” *Taipei Times*, March 18, 2016, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/03/18/2003641862.

52 Yang Tsui, “‘Wild Strawberries’ Are the Future” *Taipei Times*, December 14, 2012, www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2012/12/14/2003550093.

53 Dafydd Fell, *Taiwan's Social Movements under Ma Ying-Jeou: From the Wild Strawberries to the Sunflowers*, (London, Routledge, 2017).

54 “Taiwanese student sit-in for human rights (The Wild Strawberry Movement), 2008” Swarthmore College Global Nonviolent Action Database.



Taiwanese people attend Sunflower Movement rally (Credit: Zhang Peizhi)

angered anti-CSSTA activists was that the KMT had attempted to push the CSSTA through the legislature instead of following the review proceedings agreed upon by both parties. They argued the treaty negotiation process was undemocratic and lacked transparency. This led to widespread discontent, and many students and civil activists began to mobilize. This marked the beginning of the Sunflower Movement, which was named after the flowers that were spread to the demonstrators.⁵⁵ The flowers were meant to symbolize openness and transparency. The movement included a series of protests demanding the restoration of democratic processes and

transparency in government dealings. The key protest of this movement was the occupation of the Legislative Yuan on March 18th, when protestors stormed the assembly hall of Taiwan's Legislative Yuan and occupied the space for twenty-four days.⁵⁶ The protestors aimed to prevent the passage of the CSSTA without a thorough review to restore democratic practices in government. They insisted on scrutiny and public discussion on any agreement with China. To some extent, this reflected public concerns about possible collusion between the KMT and China and the threat of potentially undermining Taiwan's democratic values and sovereignty.

There was much public support behind the protests, and the movement saw participation from various student and civic groups who assisted protestors through food distributions, providing supplies, and setting up Wi-Fi access centers. Additionally, a major rally was organized on March 30th in front of the Presidential Office. This was the largest nonpartisan pro-democracy rally in Taiwan's history, with at least 350,000 protestors gathering in front of the Presidential Office.⁵⁷ While there was limited coverage from mainstream media, the Sunflower Movement used social media to share news about the movement to spread awareness and garner international attention. Ultimately, the protestors were able to delay passing the bill. This eventually paved the way for yet another peaceful transition of power back to the DPP in 2016 with the election of Tsai Ing-wen. The Sunflower Movement helped unleash another wave of youth activism. Many protestors remained engaged in civil society with the rise of organizations promoting direct democracy and social justice.⁵⁸ All of these movements in Taiwan's history have built a culture of activism centered on government transparency, democratic values, and Taiwan's sovereignty. This legacy of civic engagement is important for not only understanding recent

⁵⁵ "Why Sunflowers?" *The Daybreak Magazine*, July 20, 2017. daybreak.newbloommag.net/2017/07/20/why-sunflowers/.

⁵⁶ "What is Taiwan's Sunflower Movement?" *The Guardian*, March 21, 2014, www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/21/what-is-taiwan-sunflower-movement-china.

⁵⁷ Rowen, Ian. "Inside Taiwan's Sunflower Movement: Twenty-Four Days in a Student-Occupied Parliament, and the Future of the Region." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74, no. 1 (2015): 5–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43553641>.

⁵⁸ Ming-Sho Ho, "The Activist Legacy of Taiwan's Sunflower Movement," *The Carnegie Endowment*, August 2, 2018, carnegieendowment.org/research/2018/08/the-activist-legacy-of-taiwans-sunflower-movement?lang=en.

social developments but also in understanding how the island positions itself on the global stage.

Taiwan's Status in the International Community

In 1971, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758. This effectively transferred all positions in the United Nations from the ROC to the PRC government and expelled all ROC representatives in the process.⁵⁹ This decision was part of a broader shift away from the ROC as countries increasingly acknowledged the PRC's control over mainland China.⁶⁰ Since then, governments began to shift their formal recognition from Taipei to Beijing. China has since aimed to use its influence in the international community to make the "One-China Principle" the global norm.⁶¹ The One China Principle is China's official position on the status of Taiwan. The standard statement of this principle established the idea that there is one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the government of the People's

Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.⁶²

Another factor in the status of Taiwan is the idea of the 1992 Consensus. In 1986, a cargo plane bound for Hong Kong landed in Guangzhou. The plane was flown for China Airlines, based in Taiwan. This forced Taiwan and China to reopen communications to return the plane. During this time, both the ROC and PRC set up organizations to enable cross-strait agreements without official contact between their governments.⁶³

These organizations were the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) from Taiwan and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) from the People's Republic of China's Taiwan Affairs Office. China alleges that in meetings between representatives of the two organizations, they came to an agreement that there was one China, which includes Taiwan. While there were meetings between SEF and ARATS in 1992, it is disputed whether the two governments actually came to that consensus.

To make the negotiations work, both Taiwan and China had to agree to work within the premise of being a single unified China. However, it was never officially established which government was official, so both sides continue to assert their own legitimacy. This solution allowed the discussion to occur without compromising either government's claim.⁶⁴ Even if the consensus was made in the 1992 exchange, it would not be legally binding under international law. This is because the two sides were only representing their own government in regard to negotiating technical matters, such as document authentication and registered mail. The parties were not given authority to create legal obligations for the two sides regarding Taiwan's sovereignty.⁶⁵

However, China used the idea of the 1992 Consensus to enforce its One China Principle. It has been "acknowledging" and "upholding" this 1992 Consensus in many of its official statements for nearly thirty years.⁶⁶ However, Beijing's messaging has shifted in the last few years. Some recent statements by China's National People's Congress have left out the 1992 Consensus. Instead, PRC President

59 United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 2758, A/RES/2758, (Oct. 25, 1971), docs.un.org/en/A/RES/2758(XXVI).

60 James Carter, "When the PRC Won the 'China' Seat in the UN," *The China Project*, October 21, 2020, thechinaproject.com/2020/10/21/when-the-prc-won-the-china-seat-at-the-un.

61 "MFA Official on China's Position on UNGA Resolution 2758," Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Vienna, May 12, 2024, web.archive.org/web/20241113115356/vienna.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/mtjj/202405/t20240512_11303370.htm.

62 Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Vienna, "MFA Official on China's Position on UNGA Resolution 2758."

63 "The 1992 Consensus: Why It Worked – and Why It Fell Apart." *The Diplomat*, July 2022, thediplomat.com/2022/07/the-1992-consensus-why-it-worked-and-why-it-fell-apart/.

64 "The 1992 Consensus: Why It Worked – and Why It Fell Apart." *The Diplomat*.

65 Yu-Jie Chen and Jerome A. Cohen, "China-Taiwan Relations Re-Examined: The '1992 Consensus' and Cross-Strait Agreements," *Penn Carey Law*, (2019), scholarship.law.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1039&context=alr

66 "Mainland Stresses One-China Principle in Relations with Taiwan," *Xinhua Net*, July 17, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-07/17/c_135519622.html.

Xi Jinping shifted the focus of China's messaging by linking the consensus to the principle of "One Country, Two Systems" in 2019.⁶⁷ This is the arrangement under which Hong Kong and Macau are governed. It involves Beijing granting Taiwan semi-autonomous status in exchange for recognizing the existence of only "one China."⁶⁸

It is important to note that Resolution 2758 is often referred to as an endorsement of the One-China Principle in China's press releases, which is not fully accurate. The resolution did transfer the ROC's power in the UN over to the PRC. However, it does not make any statement specifically on whether Taiwan is a part of China or its own independent entity. While China claims this principle as a basic international norm among the international community, there are more details behind the issue. It is true that most countries choose to maintain formal diplomatic relations with China instead of Taiwan. However, there is a range of official stances on Taiwan and China. Some countries do endorse China's stance on Taiwan being a part of China, while the vast majority use language such as "understanding," "respecting," or "acknowledging" to sidestep taking a clear stance on the issue.⁶⁹

A notable position on the issue is the United States' "One China Policy," which acknowledges the PRC's position that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of it but does not endorse that claim. While Washington formally recognizes the PRC as the sole legal government of China, it does not recognize PRC sovereignty over Taiwan and maintains unofficial relations with Taipei. This ambiguity is what gave the United States leeway to pass the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979 to protect the significant US security and commercial interests in Taiwan. In accordance with the TRA, the United States must provide Taiwan with defensive weaponry and must maintain the capacity to resist any resort to force that jeopardizes the security of Taiwan. The TRA also authorized continuation of economic and cultural relations. Through a delicate balance of these policies, the United States has remained Taiwan's main economic supporter and a source of military arms while formally recognizing the PRC as the government of China.⁷⁰

Currently, only 12 countries continue to maintain formal recognition with Taiwan. Neither the ROC nor the PRC allows countries to maintain diplomatic relations with both of them

simultaneously. As a result, countries are forced to choose between the two. Taiwan's current number of allies has decreased over the past several years, as China has used different strategies to cut Taiwan off from its diplomatic allies.⁷¹ Retaining these allies remains important for Taiwan, since it provides the government with more international recognition. It also ensures that Taiwan will have allies to advocate for them in international forums such as the UN.⁷²

China has been targeting Taiwan's diplomatic allies to decrease Taiwan's legitimacy for decades. Under the leadership of KMT President Ma Ying-jeou, China and Taiwan were in an eight-year "diplomatic truce" from 2008 to 2016. During this time, China and Taiwan signed 23 cross-strait agreements. Collaboration between China and Taiwan slowed down after the Sunflower Movement. The diplomatic truce between the two countries ended with the election of DPP President Tsai Ing-wen. Her party is more in support of Taiwan's independence. Since 2016, China has ramped up its efforts to gain the support of Taiwan's allies to reduce Taiwan's international standing and deter Taiwan from claiming formal independence. In 2019, the PRC

67 "Highlights of Xi's Speech at Taiwan Message Anniversary Event," *China Daily*, January 2, 2019, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201901/02/WS5c2c1ad2a310d91214052069_1.html.

68 Derek Grossman, "Is the '1992 Consensus' Fading Away in the Taiwan Strait?" *The Diplomat*, June 2, 2020, thediplomat.com/2020/06/is-the-1992-consensus-fading-away-in-the-taiwan-strait.

69 Amrita Jash, "The 'One-Child Principle': China's 'Norm' Versus Global Realities," *Global Taiwan Institute*, February 21, 2024, globaltaiwan.org/2024/02/the-one-child-principle-chinas-norm-versus-global-realities.

70 Michael J. Green and Bonnie S. Glaser, "What Is The US 'One China' Policy, and Why Does it Matter?" *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, January 13, 2017, www.csis.org/analysis/what-us-one-china-policy-and-why-does-it-matter.

71 Evan Ellis, "PRC Influence and the Status of Taiwan's Diplomatic Allies in the Western Hemisphere," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 26, 2025, www.csis.org/analysis/prc-influence-and-status-taiwans-diplomatic-allies-western-hemisphere.

72 Graeme Smith, "Why Does China Still Care About Taiwan's Allies," *United States Institute of Peace*, May 28, 2024, www.usip.org/publications/2024/05/why-does-china-still-care-about-taiwans-allies.

threatened that as long as the DPP was in power, China would keep working to eventually poach all of Taiwan's diplomatic allies.⁷³

Many of China's efforts to sway Taiwanese allies have been successful. The government of Juan Carlos Varela in Panama abandoned its support for Taiwan in 2017 due to PRC promises, lobbying, and pressure. Nicaragua also switched its allegiance to the PRC and endorsed the One China Principle in 2021. This was after China provided training for the Nicaraguan military and police, offered all-expenses paid trips for journalists, and offered large infrastructure projects as incentives to change their allegiance.⁷⁴ When countries flipped their allegiance from Taiwan to China, it was accompanied by increased trade with China and assistance in industries such as agriculture, infrastructure, and tourism.

Still, even the support of Taiwan's twelve remaining allies is not guaranteed. Guatemala and Haiti are facing political challenges that make them vulnerable to Chinese pressure. Haiti and Saint Lucia have sent representatives to forums with China without officially breaking their ties with



Republic of China (Taiwan) - orthographic projection (Credit: Lilauid)

Taiwan.⁷⁵ Other countries that Taiwan can expect China to focus their attention on flipping in the future are Paraguay and Guatemala. Paraguay is Taiwan's largest ally by size, and Paraguay recently restated its commitment to its relationship with Taiwan.⁷⁶ However, China has been lobbying Paraguay's elites and working with the agricultural lobby to convince Paraguay's government to switch to China.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, China's government in Beijing has been ramping up efforts to build influence in Guatemala

through suspending purchases of Guatemalan exports, sponsoring trips to China for Guatemalan journalists and integrating Chinese companies in key sectors.⁷⁸ Taiwan has done its best to push back against China. In 2024, Taiwan launched a plan to keep its remaining diplomatic allies using its technological strengths. As a part of this plan, Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung launched an official overseas tour. During the tour, Taiwan offered economic incentives

73 Thomas J. Shattuck, "The Race to Zero?: China's Poaching of Taiwan's Diplomatic Allies," *Orbis* 64, no. 2 (2020), doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2020.02.003.

74 R. Evan Ellis, "China, Taiwan, and the Future of Guatemala," *The Diplomat*, June 17, 2024, thediplomat.com/2024/06/china-taiwan-and-the-future-of-guatemala.

75 Patricio Giusto and Juan Manuel Harán, "How Secure Are Taiwan's Remaining Diplomatic Partnerships," *The Diplomat*, June 27, 2025, thediplomat.com/2025/06/how-secure-are-taiwans-remaining-diplomatic-partnerships.

76 Johnson Lai and Huizhong Wu, "Paraguay, One of Taiwan's 12 Remaining Allies, Says it Won't Break Ties in Favor of China," *Associated Press*, November 28, 2024, apnews.com/article/taiwan-paraguay-china-relationship-6462a3936a5ba14094cdee51ad8ba92c.

77 Evan Ellis, "PRC Influence and the Status of Taiwan's Diplomatic Allies in the Western Hemisphere," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, March 26, 2025, www.csis.org/analysis/prc-influence-and-status-taiwans-diplomatic-allies-western-hemisphere

78 Ellis, "China, Taiwan, and the Future of Guatemala."



Taiwanese Official Lin Chia-lung in 2023 (Credit: Wang Yu Ching)

to its diplomatic allies.⁷⁹ Taiwan has offered Guatemala USD 90 million in aid and donations in 2021.⁸⁰

Still, this lack of formal diplomatic relations has not prevented countries from maintaining economic and political relationships with Taiwan. Taiwan has strong economic ties to the United States, Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, the European Union, and Southeast Asia. Taiwan also

exports large amounts to China despite political tensions.⁸¹ The US remains Taiwan's most fervent protector and provides Taiwan with weapons and limited political protection. However, Taiwan has broader international support from other unofficial allies as well. For example, the Philippines has enhanced its defensive cooperation with Taiwan.⁸² Additionally, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba stated that there should be

no "force or coercion" to change the status quo between Taiwan and China.⁸³

Despite support for Taiwan, China has been making progress in decreasing international recognition of Taiwan's sovereignty. China has seen increased support for the 'One China Principle' in the global south and with its military allies.⁸⁴ Currently, 70 countries officially endorse China's sovereignty over Taiwan and agree that they should be unified. The majority of these endorsements have come in the last 18 months, as China increases its diplomatic efforts in the global south. Much of these China endorsements are coming from Africa, with South America and the Middle East also being more supportive of China.⁸⁵ By diminishing Taiwan's status in the international community, China also increases the confidence that Beijing can end Taiwanese autonomy.⁸⁶ By doing this, China makes it unlikely for sanctions and censure to be enacted by the global community.⁸⁷ With this in mind, Taiwan must decide how to keep their diplomatic and political allies.

79 "Taiwan Offers Guatemala Aid as it Guards its Diplomatic Flanks from China," *Associated Press*, June 5, 2025, apnews.com/article/taiwan-guatemala-china-aid-arevalo-lai-isolation-24f2a7160ee3d10301b5c8e2b9ca5437

80 Ellis, "China, Taiwan, and the Future of Guatemala."

81 "Taiwan Country Commercial Guide," International Trade Administration, January 10, 2024, www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/taiwan-market-overview.

82 Lery Hiciano, "Philippines Quietly Growing Defensive Ties with Taiwan: Report," *The Taipei Times*, July 15, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/07/15/2003840339.

83 "China's Stunning New Campaign to Turn the World Against Taiwan," *The Economist*, February 9, 2025, www.economist.com/international/2025/02/09/chinas-stunning-new-campaign-to-turn-the-world-against-taiwan.

84 Natalie Caloca, "China in the Taiwan Strait: February 2025," *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 9, 2025, www.cfr.org/article/china-taiwan-strait-february-2025.

85 "China's Stunning New Campaign to Turn the World Against Taiwan," *The Economist*, February 9, 2025, www.economist.com/international/2025/02/09/chinas-stunning-new-campaign-to-turn-the-world-against-taiwan.

86 Ellis, "PRC Influence and the Status of Taiwan's Diplomatic Allies in the Western Hemisphere."

87 "China's Stunning New Campaign to Turn the World Against Taiwan."

China-Taiwan Relations and Ongoing Military Tensions

Despite no armed conflict between both countries in decades, there is still a large military threat from mainland China. Since 2016, relations between China and Taiwan have worsened. China sees Taiwan as part of its country, but Taiwan continues to operate like an independent country. It has its own government, army, courts, and elections. Most people in Taiwan do not want to be ruled by China.⁸⁸ Recently, China has grown increasingly aggressive. It warns Taiwan not to become fully independent. China has used both military threats and various forms of political pressure to achieve this goal. At the same time, Taiwan's leaders continue to push back, saying their future should be decided by their people.

In 2005, China passed its Anti-Secession Law. This law says China can use force if Taiwan tries to become independent.⁸⁹ It also says China can attack if peaceful reunification becomes impossible. This law does not give clear rules

and is vague on purpose. In article 8 of the law, it says China can use “non-peaceful means” if certain red lines are crossed, such as a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan or significant foreign intervention.⁹⁰ This law allows China to keep the option of war open. Many legal experts say this law is more of a warning than a real legal tool, since Taiwan is functionally independent already.⁹¹

China's leaders continue to say they want peaceful reunification

This law says China can use force if Taiwan tries to become independent.

It also says China can attack if peaceful reunification becomes impossible.

but are also clear that they are not opposed to using military force.⁹² In early 2025, China's government said they would firmly “advance reunification” and warned Taiwan that delays would only make

things worse. This is seen as China implying that time favors their own objectives.⁹³ Since 2022, China has deployed military planes and ships near Taiwan. It holds large war games and military drills around Taiwan's coast. These drills include fighter jets, navy ships, and missile systems. Oftentimes, these activities include circling the island, which can be seen as a clear threat. China has also begun to simulate blockades around the island. This suggests that they are looking for ways to cut the island off from outside trade. These exercises also frequently involve crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait. Chinese fighter jets have also been entering Taiwan's self-declared air defense identification zone (ADIZ).⁹⁴ In September and November 2023, China held some of its largest drills in years. These exercises involved thousands of troops, hundreds of aircraft, and dozens of warships, simulating attacks from multiple directions and practicing assault scenarios.⁹⁵ In May 2025, China sent over 60 military aircraft and dozens of ships into Taiwan's airspace and waters. These military assets conducted

88 “What is ‘Taiwan Independence’ and is Taiwan Already Independent?,” *Reuters*, February 16, 2025, www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/what-is-taiwan-independence-is-taiwan-already-independent-2025-02-17.

89 Xu Yi, “Anti-Secession Law,” *Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China*, last modified June 29, 2021, <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/xb/Publications/LR/4888396.html>.

90 Bonny Lin, “Employing ‘Non-Peaceful’ Means Against Taiwan,” *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-10/241015_Lin_Means_Taiwan.pdf?VersionId=4PU_wYq.V6AFbR22H8QsRyQFgV2c6X7q.

91 “China's Strategic Ambiguity on Taiwan,” *The SAIS Review of International Affairs*, April 21, 2024, saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/chinas-strategic-ambiguity-on-taiwan/.

92 “Mainland Warns Against Sending Wrong Signals to ‘Taiwan Independence’ Forces,” *China Daily*, June 26, 2025, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202506/26/WS685cac03a310a04af22c89ca.html.

93 “Taiwan Affairs Office Responds to Absence of ‘Peaceful Reunification’ in 2024 and 2025 Government Work Reports,” *Global Times*, March 12, 2025, www.globaltimes.cn/page/202503/1329961.shtml?.

94 “China Flies 103 Military Planes Toward Taiwan In a New High in Activity the Island Calls Harassment,” *Associated Press*, September 18, 2023, apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-flights-b8a78493341bd3af15f4fd58be692e4d.

95 Christopher Bodeen, “China keeps Up Military Pressure on Taiwan, Sending 43 Planes and 7 Ships Near Self-Governing Island,” *Associated Press*, November 1, 2023, apnews.com/article/china-taiwan-aircraft-ships-harassment-5dd5c16577e33b7cf464a7de00e54092.



Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited (TSMC) Hsinchu Science Park, Taiwan (Credit: Peellden)

joint combat readiness patrols and practiced strikes against simulated targets.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, Taiwan has continued to be defiant of the threats posed by China. In May 2024, Lai Ching-te was elected president of Taiwan. He comes from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which supports a stronger Taiwanese identity. Under President Lai, Taiwan has focused more on national defense. His government

created a 17-point security plan. This plan is aimed at strengthening military training, improving reserve forces, and developing warfare capabilities.⁹⁷ He also led live-fire military drills using US weapons. These actions show that Taiwan is taking the threat from China seriously and preparing.⁹⁸ Taiwan has responded to Chinese military exercises in the South China Sea by holding their own drills. The Taiwanese military has practiced

defending its cities, ports, and key government buildings. These exercises, often named “Han Kuang” drills, simulate various invasion scenarios. This includes counter-landing operations and urban warfare.⁹⁹ In July 2025, Taiwan ran its largest military exercise and demonstrated its readiness to fight back against a full-scale assault.¹⁰⁰ The exercise also displayed Taiwan’s new weapons that they had bought from the United States. The new weapons include the US-made Abrams tanks, HIMARS rocket systems, and domestic Sky Sword missiles. All of these weapons are designed to strengthen Taiwan’s asymmetric warfare capabilities.¹⁰¹

The United States has also shown no signs of ceasing to supply Taiwan’s military. During his first term, President Trump sold Taiwan billions of dollars in advanced weapons, including F-16 fighter jets and anti-ship missiles.¹⁰² In 2024, Trump officials said they wanted to sell even more weapons than during his first term.¹⁰³ At the same time, Trump and other US leaders said they do not officially support full Taiwanese independence. This strategy is

96 Bodeen, “China keeps Up Military Pressure on Taiwan, Sending 43 Planes and 7 Ships Near Self-Governing Island.”

97 John Dotson, “The Lai Administration Vows Renewed Efforts to Combat PRC Espionage and Subversion,” *Global Taiwan*, April 2, 2025, globaltaiwan.org/2025/04/the-lai-administration-vows-renewed-efforts-to-combat-prc-espionage-and-subversion/

98 Yimou Lee, “Taiwan President Warns of China’s ‘Infiltration’ Effort, Vows Counter Measures,” *Reuters*, March 13, 2025, www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/taiwan-president-says-china-has-deepened-influence-campaign-infiltration-against-2025-03-13/

99 Fanny Chao and Ryan Brobst, “Taiwan’s Han Kuang drills demonstrate its quills are growing sharper,” *Defense News*, July 25, 2025, www.defensenews.com/opinion/2025/07/25/taiwans-han-kuang-drills-demonstrate-its-quills-are-growing-sharper/

100 Yimou Lee, “Taiwan Launches Biggest War Games with Simulated Attacks Against Military Command,” *Reuters*, July 9, 2025, www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/taiwan-launches-annual-war-games-with-simulated-attacks-against-military-command-2025-07-09/

101 Greg Torode and Fabian Hamacher, “Taiwan Shows Off New US Tanks Amid Annual War Games,” *Reuters*, July 10, 2025, www.reuters.com/world/china/taiwans-shows-off-new-us-tanks-annual-war-games-intensify-2025-07-10/

102 Ellen Mitchell, “Trump Administration Approves \$2.37B Arms Sale to Taiwan,” *The Hill*, October 26, 2020, thehill.com/policy/defense/522861-trump-administration-approves-237b-arms-sale-to-taiwan/

103 “Trump Aims to Exceed First Term’s Weapons Sales to Taiwan, Reuters Reports,” *CNBC*, May 30, 2025, www.cnn.com/2025/05/30/trump-aims-to-exceed-first-terms-weapons-sales-to-taiwan-reuters.html

called “strategic ambiguity.” This is where the US supports Taiwan while still claiming they do not support independence.¹⁰⁴ In early 2025, Trump and his advisors began quietly changing their language. Some US statements removed key lines saying the US does not support Taiwan’s independence.¹⁰⁵ This was noticed by both China and Taiwan. While the US has not said anything official, it is clear that its policy is shifting.¹⁰⁶ In June 2025, President Donald Trump ordered direct airstrikes on Iran’s nuclear facilities. Trump used B-2 stealth bombers and Tomahawk missiles targeting sites like Fordow and Natanz, which are central to Iran’s nuclear program. Some experts say this signals potential US willingness to act on threats in other regions, like the Indo-Pacific. The strikes on Iran caught global attention and sparked international debate. In Taiwan, people watched closely. Some saw it as proof that the US is willing to use force to back its allies and commitments.¹⁰⁷

The threat of war is real. China is growing stronger, and Taiwan is preparing to defend itself. At the same time, the United States is increasing its support but still

avoids full commitment to Taiwan’s independence. As China continues to pressure Taiwan, Taiwan becomes more confident and continues to work on preparing its military to defend the island.

TSMC and Technology in Taiwan

Recently, semiconductors have emerged as one of the most important manufactured goods around the world. Semiconductors are small pieces of integrated circuits carrying tens of billions of transistors and powering various technologies. Production of these chips is crucial, and manufacturing is concentrated in one country: Taiwan. Taiwan is home to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), the world’s largest and most advanced semiconductor manufacturer. TSMC produces more than 90 percent of the world’s advanced microchips.¹⁰⁸ These chips are a critical piece of advanced goods such as smartphones, automobiles, and LED lights. TSMC has nearly 500 customers—including Apple, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), NVIDIA, and

Qualcomm. All these companies depend on the country’s technology and intellectual property. If the semiconductor industry falls under Chinese control, there would be devastating effects on the global economy. In fact, it is estimated that losing access to Taiwanese semiconductors would decrease the United States’ GDP by five to ten percent.¹⁰⁹ This makes Taiwan an integral part of global supply chains. Taiwan’s semiconductors are also vital for the world’s technology and artificial intelligence (AI) industries. This has created a “Silicon Shield” against Chinese military aggression.¹¹⁰ The Silicon Shield is a concept that the economic consequences of losing access to Taiwan’s chips would be so great that it helps protect Taiwan from outside threats. This shield gives Taiwan leverage in matters related to its national sovereignty. Former Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen described the Silicon Shield as a tool for Taiwan to use to protect itself from “aggressive attempts by authoritarian regimes to disrupt global supply chains.”¹¹¹

The recent AI boom has increased the world’s reliance on Taiwan’s semiconductors, especially in

104 “US Drops Wording Saying It Does Not Support Taiwan Independence,” *Al Jazeera*, February 17, 2025, www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/2/17/us-drops-wording-saying-it-does-not-support-taiwan-independence.

105 Richard Lloyd Parry, “China Urges US to ‘Correct Mistake’ After Hint of Taiwan Support,” *The Sunday Times*, February 17, 2025, www.thetimes.com/world/asia/article/us-hints-at-support-for-independent-taiwan-bpwvt5dd0?

106 Chee Meng Tan, “Trump’s Quiet Change on Taiwan A Shot Across China’s Bow,” *Asia Times*, February 20, 2025, asiatimes.com/2025/02/trumps-quiet-change-on-taiwan-a-shot-across-chinas-bow/.

107 Chris Buckley, “How Trump’s Strike on Iran Might Affect China’s Calculus on Taiwan,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2025, www.nytimes.com/2025/06/26/world/asia/iran-china-trump-taiwan.html

108 Karsten Lyle and Alexander Xia, “Taiwan’s Divisive Monopoly Over Semiconductors,” *Tufts Hemispheres*, March 24, 2025, tuftshemispheres.org/2025/03/24/taiwans-divisive-monopoly-over-semiconductors/.

109 Lyle and Xia, “Taiwan’s Divisive Monopoly Over Semiconductors.”

110 Richard Engel, Charlotte Gardiner, Jennifer Jett, and Alexander Smith, “Why War with China Over Taiwan Could Ruin the Global Economy,” *NBC News*, June 29, 2023, www.nbcnews.com/news/world/taiwan-war-china-us-ruin-global-economy-semiconductors-chips-rcna91321

111 Ming-Chin Monique Chu and Peter C.Y. Chow, *Technology Rivalry Between the USA and China* (New York: CUNY New York Department of Economics and Business, 2025), 309–338, link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-76169-0_10.

the United States. Taiwan's AI semiconductor manufacturing is mostly done by TSMC. Similar to regular consumer chips, TSMC has worked with NVIDIA, Amazon, Google, and Microsoft on their recent AI computing projects. This usually means developing and manufacturing much more advanced and sophisticated chips that have significantly more power. These projects have helped make the country become a dominant player in AI. This new AI investment has allowed Taiwan's AI-related exports to overtake China's.¹¹² As part of the tech war between the US and China, former President Biden banned US-designed AI chips from being shipped to China in 2022. This was an attempt to limit China's access to the newest technologies and to shift further production to Taiwan.¹¹³ The Trump administration has since reversed these requirements with the argument that regulations could actually push countries to turn to China instead.¹¹⁴

However, Taiwan's semiconductor industry serves as a double-edged sword. While the Silicon Shield may deter China from invading due to the economic consequences, Taiwan's semiconductor advantage

also motivates China to take the country's manufacturing ability for itself through force. With this risk, TSMC and Dutch manufacturer ASML have created a kill switch for their AI factories.¹¹⁵ ASML plays a major role in TSMC's operations, since ASML is the only company in the world that can manufacture the machines used to make chips. These kill switches can disable their factories in Taiwan if China were to ever invade. This would prevent China from being able to gain any benefits through an invasion. However, the presence of China in the region also makes concentrating factories in Taiwan risky. This has pushed TSMC and ASML to build some of their facilities outside of Taiwan. It has also led countries to try to reduce their reliance on Taiwan's semiconductors. Japan, South Korea, the European Union (EU), and even China have increased domestic investments into semiconductors recently.

In 2022, the Biden administration passed the CHIPS Act. The CHIPS Act offers incentives to bring semiconductor manufacturing back to the United States. One of the incentives includes providing USD 53 billion in funding for domestic semiconductor research

and manufacturing.¹¹⁶ The CHIPS Act is an attempt to strengthen the United States' domestic semiconductor industry and reduce reliance on the TSMC. While the US is still supportive of Taiwan, they are still taking steps to protect against the risks posed by China. Already, the CHIPS Act has generated considerable interest from companies looking to protect their supply chains. More than USD 70 billion in subsidies have been applied for, and the private sector has already invested USD 200 billion since the law passed.¹¹⁷ Like the US, China has also aimed to build its own semiconductor manufacturing capabilities and has invested in fabrication plants. TSMC has set up a fabrication plant in China similar to some that are being built in the US.

In response, the US has restricted the movement of Taiwanese semiconductor manufacturing to mainland China. The rise in Chinese chip manufacturing would threaten US national security due to potential military applications.¹¹⁸ The US has taken further action to limit China's semiconductor capabilities by restricting semiconductor exports to 140 Chinese companies in 2024.¹¹⁹

112 Crystal Hsu, "AI Demand Leads to Record-High Exports," *Taipei Times*, July 9, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/biz/archives/2025/07/09/2003839958

113 Josh Boak and Matt O'Brien, "Biden's Administration Proposes New Rules on Exporting AI Chips, Provoking an Industry Pushback," *Associated Press*, January 13, 2025, apnews.com/article/biden-ai-artificial-intelligence-chips-computer-trade-4495b5b4a48e856dc612e7abe3e47d20

114 "Trump Administration Rescinds Curbs on AI Chip Exports to Foreign Markets," *Associated Press*, May 14, 2025, apnews.com/article/trump-biden-ai-chip-export-curbs-rescinded-bb05a9760abb8a320a447f58599e2ab6

115 Huileng Tan, "The World's Top Chipmakers Can Flip a 'Kill Switch' Should China Invade Taiwan, Bloomberg Reports," *Business Insider*, May 22, 2024, www.businessinsider.com/asml-tsmc-semiconductor-chip-equipment-kill-switch-china-invade-taiwan-2024-5

116 Michelle Kurilla, "What Is the CHIPS Act?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 29, 2024, www.cfr.org/in-brief/what-chips-act

117 Kurilla, "What Is the CHIPS Act?"

118 Karsten Lyle and Alexander Xia, "Taiwan's Divisive Monopoly Over Semiconductors," *Hemispheres*, March 24, 2025, tuftshemispheres.org/2025/03/24/taiwans-divisive-monopoly-over-semiconductors/

119 Karen Freifeld and Davis Shepardson, "Latest US Clampdown on China's Chips Hit Semiconductor Toolmakers," *Reuters*, December 2, 2024, www.reuters.com/technology/latest-us-strike-chinas-chips-hits-semiconductor-toolmakers-2024-12-02/

In March of 2025, President Trump said that he believes Taiwan “stole” the US chip business and threatened 100 percent tariffs on foreign-made processors.¹²⁰ However, there is no evidence that Taiwan stole any of its technology from the United States. In fact, Taiwanese semiconductors such as TSMC have frequently partnered with US companies to manufacture the chips these US companies design. To maintain positive relations with the US, TSMC has begun building manufacturing facilities in the United States. The TSMC had also invested USD 40 billion into transferring technological expertise into the US under President Biden in 2022. These funds went toward building two semiconductor manufacturing facilities in the US state of Arizona.¹²¹

In March 2025, TSMC announced that they would pour USD 100 billion into strengthening chip manufacturing in the US, in the hopes of making the US an artificial intelligence hub. These investments would go toward building more semiconductor manufacturing facilities in Arizona.¹²² Following this announcement, former KMT President Ma Ying-jeou accused the DPP of “selling TSMC” to Trump as a “protection fee.”¹²³



Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) Global R&D Center at Night (Credit: Zeng Chengxun)

He has continued to use this language to attack TSMC and the DPP for sacrificing a vital Taiwanese asset. However, others have acknowledged the necessity of securing support from the United States and expressed their support for the move.¹²⁴ Historically, Taiwan has depended upon the US for military and political support. The Taiwan Relations Act makes it so that the US is legally obligated to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself against a possible attack by China. Despite Taiwan's efforts, there is still uncertainty over

whether the US will continue to support Taiwan.¹²⁵ While President Trump has condemned the CHIPS Act, he has also suggested pulling back US support for Taiwan. There is a possibility he may pressure Taiwan to pay further protection fees or give up more of their technology. The more of its technology Taiwan gives up to the US, the weaker their Silicon Shield becomes.

120 Tony Yang, “Trump, Taiwan and the Chip Truth,” *Taipei Times*, March 2, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2025/03/02/2003832724.

121 Yang, “Trump, Taiwan and the Chip Truth.”

122 Samantha Subin, “Trump Announces \$100 billion Investment in US from TSMC, Calls it ‘Most Powerful Company’ in World,” *CNBC*, March 3, 2025, www.cnbc.com/2025/03/03/tsmc-to-announce-100-billion-investment-in-us-chip-plants.html

123 “Taiwan and the Silicon Shield: The Case of Semiconductors & Taiwan’s Geopolitical Safety,” *Indo-Pacific Studies Center*, 2025, www.indo-pacificstudiescenter.org/commentaries/taiwan-silicon-shield

124 John Liu and Wayne Chang, “Fear and Resignation After ‘World’s Most Powerful Company’ Pays Trump a \$100 Billion ‘Protection Fee,’” *CNN Business*, March 13, 2025, www.cnn.com/2025/03/13/tech/taiwan-tsmc-us-investment-reactions-intl-hnk/index.html?Date=20250314&Profile=CN&utm_content=1741924807&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwY2xjawJBW4ZleHRuA2FlbQlXMQABHZWQs-bbj6wxHqzNs1ooiTQuZefKYKXUR8w8xVnq8slkxbwqXt5MqljHCA_aem_cZIB-Je5TerS_Na4y2jiQw

125 Liu and Chang, “Fear and Resignation After ‘World’s Most Powerful Company’ Pays Trump a \$100 Billion ‘Protection Fee.’”

CURRENT STATUS

Increased Interference by the PRC

Recently, Beijing has increased its involvement in Taiwan's political and military affairs. In January 2024, Taiwan held elections for its presidency and 113-seat Legislative Yuan.¹²⁶ The presidential election was between three major candidates: Lai Ching-te from the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Hou You-ih from the Kuomintang Party (KMT), and Ko Wen-je from the Taiwan People's Party (TPP).¹²⁷ With growing tensions between the countries, the stakes for the 2024 election were higher than ever. Weeks before Taiwan held its elections, Chinese President Xi Jinping added to that pressure by stating that the "reunification of the motherland is a historical inevitability."¹²⁸ The three candidates in Taiwan's 2024 election had different views on how to approach relations with Beijing. Notably, Lai of the DPP is a proponent of Taipei's sovereignty, while his main rival, Hou Yu-ih from the KMT, believes in friendlier relations with the mainland.

Meanwhile, the Taiwan People's Party claims to be the middle ground between the two extremes.

Since DPP President Tsai Ing-wen came to power in 2016, cross-strait dialogue has been suspended.¹²⁹ Historically, China has refused to engage with any DPP-led administration from Taiwan while building strong ties with the KMT. This is because Beijing perceives the DPP as a party that aims for independence and has not accepted the "One-China Principle." The DPP's party charter states that it aims to "establish a sovereign, independent, and autonomous Republic of Taiwan." Beijing is also especially critical of Lai, who called himself a "pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence" in 2017.¹³⁰ Independent Taiwanese fact-checking organizations looked into interference in the 2024 election across Taiwanese and Chinese state media. These included Doublethink Lab and the Taiwanese FactCheck Center. They uncovered a series of disinformation campaigns from the Chinese government with online and offline components. These campaigns primarily pushed

narratives that tried to scare voters about a looming war and cast doubt on how dependable the US was as an ally. This was meant to scare citizens away from siding with the more pro-independence DPP.

There were also numerous disinformation campaigns spreading rumors attacking presidential candidates on social media. These included rumors that Lai Ching-te had illegitimate children and that Hsiao Bi-khim was secretly a US citizen.¹³¹ China also used AI-generated content and coordinated fake social media accounts to spread disinformation through TikTok and Instagram Shorts. In one of these social media campaigns, Doublethink Lab found that there were errors left on a post that revealed it was originally written in simplified Chinese and converted to traditional afterward. This is an important detail, since mainland China typically uses simplified Chinese, while Taiwan uses traditional Chinese. The Taiwanese Factcheck Center also found that while the majority of AI-generated content is still easy to identify, there is an increase of sophisticated

126 Brian Hart, Scott Kennedy, Jude Blanchette, and Bobby Lin, "Taiwan's 2024 Elections: Results and Implications," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 19, 2024, www.csis.org/analysis/taiwans-2024-elections-results-and-implications.

127 Russel Hsiao, "The Prospects for Taiwan's 2024 Presidential and Legislative Elections," *Global Taiwan Institute*, December 13, 2023, globaltaiwan.org/2023/12/the-prospects-for-taiwans-2024-presidential-and-legislative-elections/.

128 Victor Jack, "China's Xi Says Reunification with Taiwan 'Inevitable,' Ahead of Crucial Vote on Island," *Politico*, December 31, 2023, www.politico.eu/article/taiwan-china-reunification-inevitable-xi-jinping-election-2024/.

129 Hart et al., "Taiwan's 2024 Elections: Results and Implications."

130 Stuart Lau, "Taiwan is Heading For a Pivotal Election That Will Define Its Fraught Relationship with China. Here's What's At Stake," *Business Insider*, January 8, 2024, www.businessinsider.com/taiwan-2024-election-explained-whats-at-stake-relations-with-china-2024-1.

131 Eve Chiu, Billion Lee, Wen-Ping Liu, Shun-Ching Yang, Chihhao Yu, and Bonny Lin, "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's 2024 Elections and Lessons Learned," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 10, 2024, www.csis.org/events/chinese-interference-taiwans-2024-elections-and-lessons-learned.

AI-generated fake content that is bypassing detectors and becoming harder to detect.¹³²

The narrative most widely spread by Beijing was that there was election fraud. These claims were meant to undermine the integrity of Taiwan's 2024 elections and hurt DPP President Lai's legitimacy. This was spread through local Taiwanese influencers following a script as well as through AI-generated content. There was a video showing an election worker miscounting a ballot for the wrong candidate that circulated widely online. This was found to be selectively edited since the error in counting the ballot was later spotted and corrected.¹³³ Taiwan responded swiftly to these rumors with fact-checking groups debunking false information and the Central Election Commission holding a news conference to deny claims of electoral discrepancies.

China's disinformation campaigns have become increasingly localized and sophisticated. However, Taiwan's civil society has been pushing back against Chinese and local disinformation. Rumors are quickly debunked, fact-checkers are careful not to take any government money, and AI fact-checking chatbots have been helping sort fact

from fiction.¹³⁴ However, with the issue of combatting disinformation, Taiwan's government will strike a balance between respecting free speech and protecting its national security.¹³⁵

Using disinformation and espionage, Beijing has engaged Taiwan in a battle of psychological warfare. Beijing is trying to destabilize Taiwan by increasing fears and creating social divisions.¹³⁶ China has also engaged in an espionage campaign with the aim of gaining information on the

China has a history of using tactics to gather influence on other countries through a strategy known as the "United Front."

island's defense planning. China has a history of using tactics to gather influence on other countries through a strategy known as the United Front. This is an operation by the Chinese Communist Party and coordinated by the 'United Front' Work Department to spread

pro-unification messaging online in Taiwan through celebrities and influencers.¹³⁷ Currently, the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party runs propaganda campaigns. Meanwhile, the Ministry of State Security of China has been coordinating traditional spying activities through military intelligence and cyberattacks.¹³⁸ Chinese espionage has also recently ramped up in Taiwan, with espionage efforts infiltrating former and active military, government officials, and ordinary citizens.

Taiwan has also repeatedly confronted cyberattacks from the PRC. In 2025, China's cyberattacks against Taiwan became more frequent and more severe. These attacks mainly targeted governmental institutions, law enforcement agencies, and financial agencies. As a result, cybersecurity has been increasingly linked to national security in Taiwan. Cybersecurity-focused government agencies have been established. These agencies are the National Information and Communications Security Office under the National Security Council, the Department of Cyber Security within the Executive Yuan, and

132 Chiu et al., "Chinese Interference in Taiwan's 2024 Elections and Lessons Learned."

133 Davis Klepper and Huizhong Wu, "How Taiwan Beat Back Disinformation and Preserved the Integrity of its Election," *Associated Press*, January 29, 2024, apnews.com/article/taiwan-election-china-disinformation-vote-fraud-4968ef08fd13821e359b8e195b12919c.

134 Davis Klepper, and Huizhong Wu, "How Taiwan Preserved Election Integrity by Fighting Back Against Disinformation," *Public Broadcasting Service*, January 27, 2024, www.pbs.org/newshour/world/how-taiwan-preserved-election-integrity-by-fighting-back-against-disinformation

135 Emily Feng, "Taiwan deals with lots of misinformation, and it's harder to track down," *National Public Radio*, January 11, 2024, www.npr.org/2024/01/11/1216340756/taiwan-election-disinformation-social-media-ptt

136 Shaoyu Yuan and Jun Xiang, "Beyond the Battlefield: China's Quiet Bid to Sway Taiwan's 2024 Election (and Future)," *The Diplomat*, December 2, 2023, thediplomat.com/2023/12/beyond-the-battlefield-chinas-quiet-bid-to-sway-taiwans-2024-election-and-future/

137 "China's Overseas United Front Work: Background and Implications for the United States," US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, accessed July 19, 2025, www.uscc.gov/research/chinas-overseas-united-front-work-background-and-implications-united-states

138 Christopher Bodeen, "Taiwan's Spy Agency Says China is Working with Gangs, Shell Companies to Gain Intelligence on Taiwan," *Associated Press*, January 13, 2024, apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-spying-criminal-gang-2879327f20b69b6d6762394edba979dd.

the Information, Communication, and Electronics Force Command under the Ministry of National Defense.¹³⁹ In July of 2025, hackers affiliated with China were discovered targeting the Taiwanese semiconductor industry between March and June. The targets included small businesses, analysts at an international bank, and large global enterprises.¹⁴⁰ Due to these attacks, the Center for New American Security recommended increased spending on cybersecurity and for the US to launch a “Cyber Shield” initiative to help protect Taiwan against cybercrime.¹⁴¹

China has gained access to sensitive and classified information on Taiwan's national security through active and retired military personnel for over twenty years. In 2006, Xie Xihang built a spy ring of agents among currently serving and retired military officers. The Taiwanese military officers and their families were lured by all-expenses-paid trips abroad and thousands of dollars in cash payments and gifts. This is just one example of how Taiwanese military officials have been lured to become Chinese spies with incentives. To combat these espionage efforts, the Ministry of

Justice Investigation Bureau has engaged in efforts to track down and convict spies. A review in 2021 found 21 officers guilty of recruiting spies for China or passing over sensitive information to China. Two officers were convicted of leaking sensitive information about former DPP President Tsai Ing-wen's security to a Chinese intelligence agency. The information included an organization chart of the Special Service Center and information on senior security officers guarding President Tsai.¹⁴²

As tensions have risen in the past few years, Beijing has also ramped up its military espionage efforts. From 2011 to 2023, Taiwan has uncovered forty cases involving 113 individuals spying for Beijing, and from 2022 to mid-2024, they recorded over 1,700 attempts to recruit spies for espionage through the internet. Recently, these efforts have also become increasingly sophisticated. In 2024, Taiwan's High Prosecutor's Office dismantled a ten-person spy ring that recruited personnel to pass classified information, troop deployments, and top-secret combat plans to China. This newer espionage ring also involved tactics

such as cryptocurrency payments, encrypted messaging, and videos to use as propaganda in case of a war. This highlights how Beijing is using increasingly sophisticated techniques.¹⁴³

In June of 2025, two soldiers were also found to have passed information from within the President's Office to Beijing. They were convicted of corruption instead of espionage since the information they passed over was sensitive and not classified. The soldiers were each given prison sentences of five to seven years.¹⁴⁴ This has raised concerns over Taiwan's punishment for espionage being too lenient, especially when Taiwan's national security authorities estimate about 5,000 people are currently collecting intelligence in Taiwan for Beijing.¹⁴⁵ Beijing has also infiltrated Taiwan's government, as four former members of the Democratic Progressive Party were indicted on spying charges. These members were advisers and aides in key offices, including the presidential office and the National Security Council.¹⁴⁶ There have also been accusations from Taiwan's pro-independence media that the KMT

139 Enescan Lorci, “The Nexus of Cybersecurity and National Security: Taiwan's Imperatives Amidst Escalating Cyber Threats,” *Global Taiwan Institute*, March 20, 2024, globaltaiwan.org/2024/03/the-nexus-of-cybersecurity-and-national-security-taiwans-imperatives-amidst-escalating-cyber-threats/.

140 A.J. Vicens, “China-Linked Hackers Target Taiwan's Chip Industry with Increasing Attacks, Researchers Say,” *Reuters*, July 16, 2025, www.msn.com/en-us/technology/cybersecurity/exclusive-china-linked-hackers-target-taiwan-s-chip-industry-with-increasing-attacks-researchers-say/ar-AA1IJPDc.

141 William Hetherington, “Group Urges US to Boost Taiwan Cyberdefense Ties,” *Taipei Times*, July 6, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/07/06/2003839820.

142 “T-Day: The Battle for Taiwan,” Reuters Investigates, accessed July 19, 2025, www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/taiwan-china-wargames/.

143 Russell Hsiao, “Recent Chinese Spy Cases in Taiwan: Knowns, Unknowns, and Implications,” *Global Taiwan Institute*, September 4, 2024, globaltaiwan.org/2024/09/recent-chinese-spy-cases-in-taiwan/.

144 Lily Kuo and Vic Chiang, “Taiwanese Soldiers Guarding President's Office Were Spying for China,” *The Guardian*, March 28, 2025, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2025/03/28/taiwanese-soldiers-jailed-chinese-espionage/.

145 Lily Kuo and Vic Chiang, “Taiwanese Soldiers Guarding President's Office Were Spying for China,”

146 “Taiwan Indicts Four Former Members of Ruling Party Accused of Spying for China,” *Associated Press*, June 10, 2025, apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-spying-ruling-party-84e39d3ac5cc2fd3af662b4e05cc05e9.

is collaborating with the CCP and acting as a proxy of Beijing in Taiwan.¹⁴⁷ Although the KMT party maintains frequent contact with the CCP, it is unclear whether they are acting under Beijing's instruction.¹⁴⁸ Regardless, it is obvious Beijing's espionage has been effective at sowing distrust and division between Taiwan's political parties.

In response, Taiwan has launched investigations into civil servants and members of the military holding Chinese national IDs. The investigation only found two individuals with Chinese national IDs, including one individual who voluntarily turned themselves in. He was transferred to a position that does not involve access to sensitive information. An investigation by the Control Yuan found that 318 public officials traveled illegally to China in the past decade. In light of sensitive information being leaked to China, some have called on Taiwan to strengthen its classified information system.

In early 2025, President Lai Ching-te warned that China was conducting "hybrid warfare" against Taiwan, using gangs, media, and financial networks to undermine trust in the government. This shows the scope of Chinese interference. It has reached almost every corner



Taiwan High Prosecutors Office plate (Credit: Solomon203)

of Taiwanese society. This is based off a report released by Taiwan's National Security Bureau. The CCP has even instructed gangsters to act as internal operatives and coordinate sabotage efforts in case of an invasion.¹⁴⁹ This highlights the severity and extent of Beijing's infiltration of Taiwan. China has taken advantage of Taiwan's democratic freedoms to infiltrate key sectors. In response, Taiwan has had to restrict some of those freedoms in counter-espionage efforts.¹⁵⁰ These restrictions include bringing back martial-rule-era military courts to deal harsher

punishments. The government has also tightened eligibility for a Taiwanese ID for residents from China, Hong Kong, and Macau.¹⁵¹ Given the increase of Chinese infiltrators, the government has stated it will block Chinese groups linked to the United Front from traveling to Taiwan. This includes Chinese government officials who travel as part of diplomatic delegations to meet with KMT officials. Concerns over travel have also been raised regarding KMT politicians taking trips to China, Hong Kong, and Macau.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Tzou Jiing-wen, "KMT is Doing the CCP's Bidding," *Taipei Times*, May 14, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2024/05/14/2003817819

¹⁴⁸ Bodeen, "Taiwan's Spy Agency Says China is Working with Gangs, Shell Companies to Gain Intelligence on Taiwan."

¹⁴⁹ "China Targets Gangs, Temples to Infiltrate Taiwan: NSB," *Focus Taiwan*, accessed July 19, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202504230008

¹⁵⁰ Kuo et al, "Taiwanese Soldiers Guarding President's Office Were Spying for China."

¹⁵¹ "Lai Seeks to Reinstate Military Trials Amid Growing Chinese Infiltration," *Focus Taiwan*, accessed July 19, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202503130026

¹⁵² Brian Hioe, "Taiwan Looks to Crack Down on China's Influence and Espionage Activities" *The Diplomat*, March 17, 2025, thediplomat.com/2025/03/taiwan-looks-to-crack-down-on-chinas-influence-and-espionage-activities/.



Protesters outside the Legislative Yuan in Taipei against KMT legislative reforms (Credit: Kanshui0943)

Another aspect of China's United Front strategy is leveraging cultural ties to make Taiwanese people less sensitive to threats posed by China. The strategy involves using the shared history between Taiwan and China to spread unification messaging. For example, China spread a popular Taiwanese song titled "Chinese People" to convey the message "Reunification is Winning."¹⁵³ Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council has also expressed suspicion that Chinese social media

apps such as Douyin and Rednote are being used for "United Front" propaganda.¹⁵⁴ For example, one RedNote post that showed footage of a drone taking down a Taiwanese air force base was spread on the app.¹⁵⁵ Taiwan's defense minister has stated that this video is fabricated using complex 3D composite techniques.¹⁵⁶ Still, this post triggered worries about drone detection and air defense.

China has also been found to have been using online influencers to spread its pro-China messaging. This was exposed by anti-China influencers and later confirmed by Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council.¹⁵⁷ For example, the CCP sponsored a group of Taiwanese influencers to travel to China and make videos praising the Chinese government. This led to more investigations into China's campaign with Taiwanese influencers and celebrities. Some celebrities revealed receiving letters inviting them to speak positively about China or start a new political party. These letters offered cash rewards and other benefits.¹⁵⁸

In December, the anti-CCP influencer Pa Chiung and rapper Minnan Wolf went undercover to investigate China's 'United Front' work. They pretended to be Taiwanese supporters of the CCP and were invited to the Taiwan Entrepreneurship Park in Fujian, China. While there, they recorded discussions with United Front officials about receiving payments to spread pro-China messaging to their Taiwanese audience.¹⁵⁹ The documentary also alleges that China recruits people to assist in United Front work, offering

153 Yu Ting Chen and Charles K. S. Wu, "Beyond Missiles and Trade: China's Use of Cultural Ties to Influence Taiwan," *The Diplomat*, January 11, 2025, thediplomat.com/2025/01/beyond-missiles-and-trade-chinas-use-of-cultural-ties-to-influence-taiwan/.

154 Keoni Everington, "Taiwan Agency Suspects Douyin and RedNote Are CCP Propaganda Tools," *Taiwan News*, May 29, 2025, www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6122709.

155 Natalie Caloca, "China in the Taiwan Strait: May 2025," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 8, 2025, www.cfr.org/article/china-taiwan-strait-may-2025.

156 "Taiwan Minister Calls Air Base Images on Chinese Platform 'Composites'," *Focus Taiwan*, May 26, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202505260011.

157 Chang Yi-ying, "Influencers Help China's Propaganda," *Taipei Times*, October 9, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2024/10/09/2003824987.

158 Yuchen Lee, "Recruitment of Online Influencers Reveals a New Tactic of China's United Front," *Global Taiwan Brief*, January 8, 2025, globaltaiwan.org/2025/01/recruitment-of-online-influencers-reveals-a-new-tactic-of-chinas-united-front/.

159 Duncan DeAeth, "Documentary Exposes Chinese Tactics to Recruit Taiwanese Influencers," *Taiwan News*, December 29, 2024, www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6003454; Fun TV, *China's United Front Exposed: Officials' Leaked Calls and Tactics to Buy Off Taiwanese Influencers*, YouTube video, 40:50, December 6, 2025, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IXndeTRH8tU.

financial support and PRC IDs as compensation. According to Pa Chiung's documentary on United Front work, approximately 200,000 Taiwanese people had obtained PRC passports. These activities support PRC influence operations aiming for reunification, as Beijing can use Taiwanese people holding PRC IDs to justify reunification efforts.¹⁶⁰ In 2018, Beijing released data stating that 22,000 Taiwanese had applied for household residence in China.¹⁶¹

In response, Taiwan has begun taking action against pro-China influencers. In March 2025, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council Minister Chiu Chiu-cheng warned that entertainers echoing Beijing's United Front narratives may lose Taiwanese citizenship if they hold Chinese IDs. He said that entertainers using their Taiwanese identity to spread CCP propaganda to mislead the public was unacceptable. He then declared entertainers who spread United Front messaging about China taking Taiwan by force would be investigated by authorities.¹⁶² These include some high-profile celebrities, including Patty Hou,

a Taiwanese TV show host, and Ouyang Nana, a Taiwanese musician.¹⁶³ While some were investigated, none have seen their citizenship revoked so far.

That same month, Chinese influencer Liu Zhanya, also known as "Yaya in Taiwan," saw her residence permit revoked after making pro-China content. This included remarks about Taiwan being unified with China by force. In one video she stated, "Maybe tomorrow morning, the island will be filled with five-star red flags... Just thinking about it makes me happy."¹⁶⁴ Yaya left Taiwan voluntarily and used the publicity around her departure to make an emotional appeal to the public.¹⁶⁵ She told reporters, "I'm just a housewife. I don't understand why the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is so afraid of me." She also exchanged tearful goodbyes with her husband and two sons at the airport.¹⁶⁶ Chinese media sources have latched onto her role as a wife and mother. They have used this to frame her deportation as an unjust action that unfairly violates Yaya's freedom of speech.¹⁶⁷ The Taiwan Affairs Office has branded Yaya as

a "Mainland Spouse," a Chinese citizen who has married a Taiwanese person and resides in Taiwan. Following Yaya's deportation, the spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office stated that "mainland spouses are family members of Taiwanese people... The DPP's actions violate basic human ethics and are utterly inhumane." By using the mainland spouse angle, China is appealing to the public's emotions and sympathy to further their United Front agenda.¹⁶⁸

In April of 2025, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council issued a new interpretation of the Cross-Strait Act, a 1992 law that prevented Taiwan nationals from holding Chinese citizenship. This new interpretation specified that holding a permanent residency certificate issued by China would result in the loss of "Taiwan status." This closed a loophole by clarifying the types of documents that would result in losing Taiwan status. The original scope of these documents covered Chinese household registrations, ID cards, and passports. However, with the amendments, this definition has been expanded to Chinese ID

160 Sze-Fung Lee, "PRC ID Cards and Hybrid Warfare: The Accumulated Impact on Taiwan and Potential Countermeasures," *Global Taiwan Institute*, June 4, 2025, globaltaiwan.org/2025/06/prc-id-cards-and-hybrid-warfare/.

161 Lee Wen-hsin, Chen Yu-fu, and Sam Garcia, "Chinese ID Cards are an 'Illusion' by Beijing: MAC," *Taipei Times*, January 4, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/01/04/2003829633.

162 Keoni Everington, "Taiwanese Celebrities with Chinese IDs Face Loss of Taiwan Citizenship," *Taiwan News*, March 18, 2025, www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6062160; Zhang Yi, "Taiwan's DPP Threatens Entertainers Advocating Reunification," *China Daily*, May 16, 2025, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202505/16/WS6826d1cba310a04af22bfd95.html.

163 Chen Yu-fu and Esme Yeh, "China-Based Taiwanese Entertainers to be Probed," *Taipei Times*, March 17, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/03/17/2003833558.

164 Chunmei Huang, "Chinese Influencer Yaya Ordered to Leave Taiwan After Posting Pro-China Video," *Radio Free Asia*, March 25, 2025, www.rfa.org/english/china/2025/03/25/taiwan-internet-celebrity-yaya-leaves/.

165 Everington, "Taiwanese Celebrities with Chinese IDs Face Loss of Taiwan Citizenship."

166 "I'm Just a Housewife - Mainland Spouse Yaya Expelled From Taiwan for Reunification Stance," *DotDotNews*, March 27, 2025, english.dotdotnews.com/a/202503/27/AP67e52047e4b0e343b0e49101.html.

167 "Taiwan Affairs Office Condemns Unfair Treatment of Mainland Spouses in Taiwan, Vows Accountability for 'Taiwan Independence' Perpetrators," *Global Times*, May 28, 2025, www.globaltimes.cn/page/202505/1335004.shtml.

168 "I'm Just a Housewife - Mainland Spouse Yaya Expelled From Taiwan for Reunification Stance."

cards and permanent residency certificates as well.¹⁶⁹ As a result, Chinese spouses of Taiwanese people had to prove they officially gave up their household registration in China. Roughly 12,000 Chinese immigrants in Taiwan had until June 30th to prove they had given up their household registration in China. Failure to provide that proof meant facing possible deportation. The government faced criticism over the policy's implementation. This is because many immigrants had lost documents or were forced to get proof through the Chinese authorities.¹⁷⁰

The Bluebird Movement and Taiwan's Mass Recalls

Taiwan held its presidential and legislative elections in January 2024. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) kept the presidency but lost its majority in the legislature. A narrow KMT–TPP coalition secured control of the Legislative Yuan, winning a slim majority over the DPP. This change surprised many voters since the DPP had maintained a strong majority

for several terms. Soon, the new legislature passed major changes that cut key budgets and shifted power toward lawmakers.¹⁷¹ Many people felt these moves were too sudden and lacked clear public debate. This worry set the stage for large public protests known as the Bluebird Movement. It also led to an unprecedented wave of recall elections in 2025.

After the January vote, the KMT–TPP coalition held more seats than the DPP. They used this power to pass bills quickly. Some changes reduced budgets for national security and oversight bodies.¹⁷² Critics said these cuts favored China's interests. Many citizens saw the budget cuts as risky for their safety and sovereignty. Public trust in the new legislature fell sharply. This distrust fueled citizen action. In May 2024, students and activists began gathering on Qingdao East Road in Taipei. They called their group the “Bluebird Movement” after both the street the protests took place on (a wordplay on “Qingdao,” the street, and “qingniao,” meaning bluebird) and also the resilience and freedom associated with the bird.¹⁷³ Protests

grew day by day. At first, only a few hundred people showed up each night. Many were university students, NGO workers, and civic tech volunteers who had been active in previous social movements such as Sunflower and Wild Strawberry. Within two weeks, tens of thousands of people came to listen to speeches. They held banners that read “Defend Our Democracy” and “No to Secret Laws.”¹⁷⁴ Speakers at the movement said the legislature had moved too quickly. One speaker told the crowd, “They are destroying our democracy in secret.”¹⁷⁵ Many students and young professionals joined civil society groups in protesting. They held classes on civic rights and free speech for fellow protesters or those still on the fence.¹⁷⁶

The Bluebird Movement had clear goals. Protesters wanted all proposed laws to be open for public review. They demanded no cuts to defense and oversight budgets. They called for strict procedures when passing bills, including public hearings. Common slogans were simple and direct. “No secret sessions” and “hands off our security budget” appeared on many

169 “MAC Issues Interpretation of Cross-Straits Act,” *Taipei Times*, April 25, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/04/25/2003835799.

170 Ashish Valentine, “Deadline Nears for Taiwan's Chinese Immigrants to Prove No China Household Registration,” *National Public Radio*, June 29, 2025, [wskg.org/npr-news/2025-06-29/deadline-nears-for-taiwans-chinese-immigrants-to-prove-no-china-household-registration](https://www.wskg.org/npr-news/2025-06-29/deadline-nears-for-taiwans-chinese-immigrants-to-prove-no-china-household-registration)

171 Bo Tedards, “‘Great Recall’: Taiwan's Democratic Experiment,” *The Diplomat*, July 17, 2025, thediplomat.com/2025/07/great-recall-taiwans-democratic-experiment/.

172 “Explainer: Massive Slate of Recall Votes Leaves KMT Staring Down Disaster,” *Focus Taiwan*, June 21, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202506210014.

173 Courtney Donovan Smith, “Taiwan's ‘Great Recall’ a Historic Bid to Overturn the Opposition's Legislative Majority,” *The Jamestown Foundation* 25, no.13 (July 2025), jamestown.org/program/taiwans-great-recall-a-historic-bid-to-overturn-the-oppositions-legislative-majority/.

174 Tedards, “‘Great Recall’: Taiwan's Democratic Experiment.”

175 “Recall Activists Rally in Taipei, Call for Ouster of ‘pro-China’ KMT Lawmakers,” *Focus Taiwan*, July 19, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202507190018.

176 Tedards, “Taiwan's 2025 Recalls: A Civil Society Perspective.”

signs.¹⁷⁷ Volunteers handed out leaflets explaining each demand in easy language. This approach helped students and international observers understand the issues quickly. By June 2024, the Bluebird Movement had spread to other cities. Demonstrations took place in Kaohsiung, Taichung, and Tainan. Each city held daily gatherings at key public squares. Organizers used social media to share live video and event updates. A local hashtag, #BluebirdDefendsTaiwan, trended across platforms.¹⁷⁸

International students and tourists also stopped by. Many wrote about the events in blogs and social media posts. This coverage brought global attention to Taiwan's internal politics. At its height, the movement drew nearly 100,000 participants in Taipei alone.¹⁷⁹ Many people protested for days. They formed small groups that discussed democracy and civic rights. Young people played a central role in the Bluebird Movement. These young activists taught each other how to use livestream apps, encrypted messaging, and online polls. Social media allowed quick coordination. In many ways, these students transferred a local protest

into a nationwide movement.¹⁸⁰ International students also shared resources. They translated protest updates into English, Japanese, and Korean. These translations made it possible for foreign media to report on Taiwan's situation in real time. As a result, global news outlets like NHK, The New York Times, and The Guardian ran stories on the Bluebird Movement. This broad coverage increased pressure on

They called their group the "Bluebird Movement" after both the street the protests took place on (a wordplay on "Qingdao," the street, and "qingniao," meaning bluebird) and also the resilience and freedom associated with the bird.

Taiwan's legislature.¹⁸¹

By late 2024, protesters felt as if they had limited power in the legislature. The KMT–TPP

coalition still held enough seats to pass laws quickly. Bluebird activists looked for new tools, like the recall process in Taiwan's Civil Servants Election and Recall Act. This law lets voters remove elected officials if they gather enough signatures.¹⁸² The recall election process in Taiwan involves several stages. Taiwan's recall process requires petitions first from one percent and then 10 percent of district voters; the recall succeeds if "yes" votes exceed "no" and reach at least 25 percent of eligible voters.¹⁸³

Activists formed civic groups to launch recall petitions. In December 2024, groups submitted formal petitions targeting nine KMT legislators. By February 2025, over one million valid signatures were collected nationwide. The surge in recall petitions reflected a broader frustration with legislative dominance and public disillusionment with traditional party politics. Most petitions focused on lawmakers who had supported the controversial budget cuts and rushed bills.¹⁸⁴ The Great Recall drew attention from abroad. Some foreign analysts warned of possible interference by China. Taiwan's election commission reported investigations into

177 Jason Pan, "Groups Begin New Phase of 'Bluebird Movement'," *Taipei Times*, December 25, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2024/12/25/2003829080.

178 Tedards, "Great Recall: Taiwan's Democratic Experiment."

179 Sonia Schlesinger, "Who Are The 'Bluebird Movement' Protestors?" *The New Lens*, May 30, 2024, international.thenewslens.com/article/187007

180 Bo Tedards, "Taiwan 2025 Recalls: A Civil Society Perspective," *Global Taiwan Institute*, July 2025, globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PB_BT_Taiwan2025Recalls_FINAL.pdf.

181 Jason Pan, "Bluebirds' Fail to Access Legislature," *Taipei Times*, December 21, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2024/12/21/2003828879.

182 Tedards, "Taiwan 2025 Recalls: A Civil Society Perspective."

183 "Taiwan's 2025 Legislative Recall Elections," GR Taiwan Newsletter, July 2025, grtaiwan.com/sites/default/files/content/articles/files/20250724%20Taiwan%E2%80%99s%202025%20Legislative%20Recall%20Elections%20.pdf.

184 "Groups Submit Recall Vote Proposals for 12 Opposition Lawmakers," *Focus Taiwan*, February 10, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202502100019



Recall Vote in Taiwan, July 2025 (Credit: Tieguanyin1990)

fraudulent signatures, with over 80 cases tied to KMT networks.¹⁸⁵ International election observers visited Taiwan in July 2025. They praised Taiwan's transparent recall procedures but urged safeguards against fraud. They noted the high civic engagement and called it a model for participatory democracy.

During the "Great Recall," activists targeted 37 district-elected KMT legislators and one allied independent. By July 26, 2025, recall votes were set for 24 of these seats. A second round was scheduled for August 23, 2025, covering the remaining seats. If a majority in a district votes to

recall and turnout meets rules, the legislator loses the seat. This campaign stood out for its scale. Never before had so many recall efforts proceeded at once. Experts compared it to a midterm election. For voters, it was a rare chance to directly judge lawmakers on specific actions.¹⁸⁶ They called on voters to "upset pro-China lawmakers who seek to sell out Taiwan."¹⁸⁷ The KMT said recalls were a partisan tactic that hurt stable governance.¹⁸⁸ A total of 24 KMT lawmakers faced recall on July 26th, while seven others face recall on August 23rd.

The recall election gave the Democratic Progressive Party the chance to regain more power in the legislature. If they were able to flip at least six KMT seats, they would gain control of the legislature.¹⁸⁹ In the July 26th recall elections, none of the 24 lawmakers targeted were unseated. This cements that the KMT will continue holding on to their legislative majority. These results suggest that the DPP may have made some mistakes. Analysts noted that while the recalls demonstrated high civic engagement, they also highlighted the limits of direct democracy in Taiwan's polarized environment. They overused the CCP threat as a partisan tool and used a constitutional tool meant to safeguard against misconduct for partisan gain. These election results do not mean that Taiwan's voters approve of the KMT's actions. Rather, the results suggest that voters disapprove of removing the KMT from power through the recall election process. This gives the KMT a new opportunity to re-earn the public's trust.¹⁹⁰

These mass recalls have reshaped how many see Taiwan's political scene. First, they showed the power of civic activism in Taiwan's democracy. Large-scale citizen initiatives can now affect high-level politics. Second, they highlighted

185 Bo Tedards, "Taiwan's 2025 Recalls: A Civil Society Perspective," *Global Taiwan Institute*, July 2025, globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PB_BT_Taiwan2025Recalls_FINAL.pdf.

186 "Groups Submit Recall Vote Proposals for 12 Opposition Lawmakers."

187 "Recall Activists Rally in Taipei, Call For Ouster of 'Pro-China' KMT Lawmakers," *Focus Taiwan*, July 19, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202507190018.

188 Pan, "Bluebirds' Fail to Access Legislature."

189 "Taiwan's 2025 Legislative Recall Elections."

190 Howard Shen, "Taiwan's Recall Elections Failed but that Doesn't Signal An Embrace of Beijing," *The Diplomat*, July 29, 2025, thediplomat.com/2025/07/taiwans-recall-elections-failed-but-that-doesnt-signal-an-embrace-of-beijing/.

deep public concern about China's influence. Many voters see recalls as a tool to guard national security. However, recalls also showed that they were very costly. The July wave alone is estimated to cost TWD 1.6 billion in public funds.¹⁹¹ In some KMT strongholds, by-elections may simply replace one KMT lawmaker with another. Critics say this wastes money and energy. Others fear that frequent recalls could weaken the legislature's stability.

The Bluebird Movement and the mass recalls of 2024-2025 mark a new chapter in Taiwan's democracy. Citizens used both street protests and legal tools to shape policy and hold lawmakers accountable. Youth and social media played key roles in organizing and spreading information. The Great Recall showed that large-scale citizen actions can rival party politics.

The Legislative Coup and Taiwan's Constitutional Court Deadlock

While the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency in 2024, they did not win a majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan. The DPP secured 51 seats while the Kuomintang won 52, and the TPP holds the balance of power with 8 seats.¹⁹² The TPP is a moderate

party whose views on China, Taiwan's balance of power, and recall elections align with the KMT. As a result, the Kuomintang and Taiwan People's Party coalition holds a legislative majority. Taiwan's unicameral Legislative Yuan writes and passes laws within a five-branch constitutional system that also includes the Executive, Judicial, Control, and Examination Yuns. The legislature holds broad authority to enact statutes, approve budgets, ratify treaties, and declare war or peace. In recent sessions, the opposition-led majority coalition has used its numerical advantage to pass reforms that significantly expand the legislature's oversight powers over the Executive Yuan and, indirectly, the Judicial Yuan. The KMT and TPP coalition justified these actions as necessary to restore balance between branches, though critics saw them as an attempt to weaken the presidency and judiciary. This has eroded Taiwan's set of checks and balances and threatens to limit Taiwan's democracy.

After losing the presidential race, the KMT began using their majority in the legislature to expand power while in opposition. In June 2024, the Legislative Yuan amended the Exercise of Official Powers Law, granting the legislature summons power, unrestricted access to documents, and the

ability to fine for non-compliance. The Legislative Yuan has vast investigative powers over ordinary citizens and criminalizes "contempt of the legislature."¹⁹³ Contempt could mean ignoring a legislative inquiry, disrupting proceedings, or challenging its authority.¹⁹⁴ This raises concerns that the KMT could use expanded investigatory powers to attack their political opponents. The amendment also required the president to deliver a state of the nation address on the legislative floor and take questions from lawmakers. This law has increased the opposition party's power over the DPP's Lai administration and gives the KMT the ability to launch frequent and intrusive investigations that interfere with DPP activities. The KMT also rushed the amendment of this bill through the legislature without proper review of its contents. This generated much controversy due to concerns about potential ties between certain KMT legislators and the Chinese Communist Party.¹⁹⁵ Following the passage of the amended bill, the Progressive Party's Washington, DC, mission stated that the legislature's expansion of investigative powers could be abused at the expense of civil rights.

However, the Legislative Yuan did not stop there. In December of 2024, the Legislative Yuan amended the Act Governing the Allocation

191 Matthew Strong, "Taiwan Recalls, Referendum to Cost NT\$16.2 Billion," *Taiwan News*, July 10, 2025, www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/6153224.

192 Lucy Best, "Obscured by Geopolitics, Taiwan's Constitutional Crisis Simmers in the Background."

193 "Amendment Criminalizing Contempt of Legislature Passes Into Law," *Focus Taiwan*, May 28, 2024, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202405280024.

194 Strong, Matthew. "Taiwan Constitutional Court Quashes Most Expansions of Legislative Powers," *Taiwan News*, October 25, 2024.

195 Ben Levine, "Necessary Reforms or Power Grab? A Recap on the Recent Legislative Yuan Drama," *Global Taiwan Institute*, June 12, 2024, globaltaiwan.org/2024/06/necessary-reforms-or-power-grab-a-recap-on-the-recent-legislative-yuan-drama/.

of Government Expenditures. This was one of the most controversial moves of the legislature's first year in power. These amendments gave local governments access to TWD 375.3 billion (the equivalent of USD 11.5 billion) from the central government. The KMT argued that this bill will help local governments and balance financial conditions in urban and rural areas around Taiwan, while the DPP argued that the new law is unlikely to succeed in revenue allocation but will severely hurt the central government. However, fiscal analysts warned that the bill could create short-term instability and undermine Taiwan's central defense funding structure. Before this amendment, the central government was allocated 70 percent of the country's total funds, while the local government was allocated 30 percent. Following the passage of this amendment, 60 percent of the country's funds were allocated to the central government and 40 percent to local governments.¹⁹⁶ This has limited the powers of the executive branch by slashing its budget without debate or discussion on the floor. The amendment will force massive cuts and restructuring, including cuts for defense equivalent to a 28

percent reduction.¹⁹⁷ This reduction in defense spending could strain the tense US-Taiwan relations, as US President Donald Trump is already concerned that Taiwan is not serious about defending itself.¹⁹⁸

This was only the first in a series of budget cuts rushed through the Legislative Yuan by the KMT majority. The bills were so rushed that Taiwan's lawmakers are still debating the scale of the cuts. The DPP claims that 34 percent of government spending has been cut or frozen, while the KMT claims that only around 6.63 percent of government spending has been cut. Additionally, bills are filled with errors, including incorrect figures, misidentified government agencies, and duplicates. The results of these budget changes are clear. The Office of the President has faced a 73 percent budget freeze, Taiwan's Public Television Service suffered a 25 percent budget freeze, and the legislature has ordered the executive to identify an additional TWD 63.8 billion in unspecified cuts.

Additionally, the budget cuts have impacted Taiwan's ability to carry out projects relating to national security. The Indigenous Defense Submarine Programme saw 50 percent of its budget frozen. Budget cuts have also frozen 50 percent of

the budget for an industrial park to build a drone supply chain and attract private-sector investment for dual-use drone technology. These could hurt Taiwan's military defense and diminish its competitiveness in the global drone market. The Ministry of Digital Affairs also saw a 50 percent decrease in their budget for bolstering Taiwan's digital infrastructure, halting the progress of essential projects such as undersea cable repairs and the deployment of low earth orbit satellites.¹⁹⁹ While the Executive Yuan vetoed the budget restrictions, the KMT-TPP majority in the legislature overrode it in March of 2025. Many targeted agencies have oversight functions, which lends weight to the argument that the KMT and TPP's legislative coup is not about saving money but about crippling the government.²⁰⁰ The speed of passage and lack of formal review drew widespread criticism from legal scholars and watchdog groups.

Notably, the Control Yuan saw its budget slashed by 96 percent, leaving it unable to pay utility bills. The Control Yuan is one of Taiwan's five government branches. It serves as a watchdog to oversee individuals, investigate misconduct, and audit government agencies.²⁰¹

196 "Controversial Revenue Bill Passed by Legislature," *Taipei Times*, December 22, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2024/12/22/2003828890.

197 "KMT Defends Amendments to Funding Allocation Law," *Taipei Times*, December 24, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2024/12/24/2003829028.

198 Ben Levine, "Leveraging Legislative Power: The KMT's Strategy to Regain Influence in Taiwan / Part 1: Shifting Financial Resources to Local Governments," *Global Taiwan*, January 22, 2025, globaltaiwan.org/2025/01/leveraging-legislative-power-the-kmts-strategy-to-regain-influence-in-taiwan-part-1/.

199 YouHao Lai and Gahon Chiang, "Taiwan's Looming Budget Crisis: A Stress Test For Democracy and National Security," *Taiwan Insight*, March 17, 2025, taiwaninsight.org/2025/03/17/taiwans-looming-budget-crisis-a-stress-test-for-democracy-and-national-security.

200 Michael Turton, "Notes From Central Taiwan: Eliminate the Control Yuan (and Examination Yuan, too)," *Taipei Times*, March 24, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2025/03/24/2003833942.

201 "Political Systems," Government Portal of the Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed July 27, 2025, www.taiwan.gov.tw/content_4.php.

Just weeks before its budget was slashed, the Control Yuan had imposed hefty fines on Ko Wen-je, the former TPP chairman and presidential candidate. There have also long been attempts to eliminate the Control Yuan as a branch of government. These have had widespread public support, with 55.7 percent of the public supporting abolishing it, with majorities from both the DPP and KMT. In addition to defunding the Control Yuan, the KMT-controlled legislature amended the Constitutional Court Procedure Act in December of 2024. This amendment raised the amount of judges needed to rule on an issue from half to two-thirds of members. This requires ten justices to be present for the court to pass majority judgments.

Notably, seven of fifteen constitutional court justices retired at the end of October 2024, and their replacements are awaiting approval from the legislature. Four days after passing the amendment, the Legislative Yuan vetoed all seven nominees to the Taiwan Constitutional Court, which prevented the court from reaching the two-thirds needed to pass a ruling.²⁰² Following the amendments to the act, more than 300 lawyers and 2,000 supporters

marched in Taipei in protest. The lawyers marched wearing their judicial robes to show their determination to protect the constitutional system and civil rights.²⁰³ They argued that the amendment would paralyze the court and infringe on people's constitutional rights. Legal experts warned the amendment could paralyze the court, limiting its ability to rule on constitutional rights, echoing restrictions from

More than 300 lawyers and 2,000 supporters marched in Taipei in protest. The lawyers marched wearing their judicial robes to show their determination to protect the constitutional system and civil rights.

Taiwan's martial law era. In 2024, judges have only been able to review half as many cases as they have been able to in past years.²⁰⁴

In January 2025, the DPP-controlled cabinet said it would send back the constitutional court

reforms passed on December 20th for the legislature to vote on the highly controversial bill. The Cabinet's spokesperson stated that this was because the amendment would disrupt the operations of the court, as it does not set a legal time limit for the legislature to approve the nomination of grand justices by the president.²⁰⁵ However, the legislature did not change their vote, demonstrating the political gridlock between Taiwan's parties, and the law took effect on January 25th.²⁰⁶

The KMT caucus claims the changes aim to ensure ideological diversity within the court, which currently only has judges appointed by the DPP. With the court unable to pass rulings, President Lai is forced to choose between giving in to the KMT's pressure and nominating candidates they approve of or sacrificing the functionality of a branch of government.²⁰⁷ In March, the presidential office announced a new list of nominees, nearly two months after the legislature rejected his previous selections. They nominated Tsai Chiu-ming (a head prosecutor of the Taiwan High Prosecutor's Office) and Su Su-e (a Supreme Court Judge) as the president and vice president of the Judicial Yuan, respectively. The DPP highlighted

202 Shih-An Wong, "The Smoking Gun of Democratic Backsliding? The 2024 Amendment to the Constitutional Court Procedure Act in Taiwan," Taiwan Insight, January 15, 2025, taiwaninsight.org/2025/01/15/the-smoking-gun-of-democratic-backsliding-the-2024-amendment-to-the-constitutional-court-procedure-act-in-taiwan/.

203 Wang Ting-chuan and Esme Yeh, "Lawyers march Against Constitutional Court Bills," Taipei Times, November 17, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2024/11/17/2003827021.

204 Shelley Shan, "Lawyers to Protest Over Proposed Court Changes," Taipei Times, November 13, 2024, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2024/11/13/2003826826.

205 Fion Khan, "Constitutional Court Changes to be Sent Back," Taipei Times, January 3, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2025/01/03/2003829568.

206 "President Lai Selects New Justices for Constitutional Court," Focus Taiwan, March 21, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202503210010.

207 You-Hao Lai, "Taiwan's Constitutional Crisis Threatens Its Democracy," The Diplomat, January 8, 2025, thediplomat.com/2025/01/taiwans-constitutional-crisis-threatens-its-democracy/.



Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te in 2024 (Credit: Presidential Office of the Republic of China)

their extensive experience in the judiciary and prosecuting corruption.²⁰⁸ The legislature scheduled a recorded vote for July 25th to confirm the appointment of constitutional court nominees.²⁰⁹

In his public hearing, Judicial Yuan President Nominee Tsai spoke to lawmakers about his plans for the Judicial Yuan. He said that his top priority would be to address the shortage of judges and widespread overwork by relaxing regulations under the Court Organization Act and pushing to increase the staffing quota for judges. His other priorities included decriminalizing minor offenses, promoting out-of-court dispute resolution mechanisms, and publishing

transparent sentencing guidelines to improve public trust in the judiciary. Opposition legislators have voiced concerns over Tsai's qualifications to head the Judicial Yuan since his experience is limited to being a prosecutor. If confirmed, he would become the first prosecutor to lead the Judicial Yuan. The court needed the legislature to approve at least two of President Lai's nominations to reach quorum. However, on July 25th, the KMT and TPP majority in the legislature once again rejected all seven of DPP President Lai's nominees for the constitutional court. The DPP called out this decision as a political maneuver that has once again made it difficult for the court

to pass rulings. By curbing the Constitutional Court's authority, the legislature is extending its campaign to concentrate power within the Legislative Yuan, diminishing the checks that once constrained it.²¹⁰

With Taiwan facing threats to its democracy from abroad in the form of military threats, disinformation, and espionage, now is not the time for infighting and division. The erosion of democratic systems in Taiwan makes it more vulnerable to outside interference. Failing to show a strong, unified front could lose Taiwan support abroad. As they face greater threats abroad, the KMT, DPP, and TPP must find a way to compromise and resolve differences if they are to have any hope of protecting their independence.

208 "President Lai Selects New Justices for Constitutional Court."

209 "Legislature Sets July 25 Confirmation Vote on Constitutional Court Justice Nominees," *Taipei Times*, June 13, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/06/13/2003838568.

210 Lin Hsin-Han, Lee Wen-hsin, and Fion Khan, "Legislature Rejects All Seven Grand Justice Nominees," *Taipei Times*, July 25, 2025, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/07/25/2003840911.

BLOC ANALYSIS

Points of Division

Within Taiwan's polarized political climate, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) maintains a largely cohesive ideology centered on defending a distinct Taiwanese identity, upholding democratic values, and countering Chinese interference. The party has subgroups and points of division among itself. Within the party, there is disagreement on how forceful to be on cross-strait issues with China, how far pro-independence rhetoric should go, and how much to push socially progressive policies within Taiwan. These internal differences shape the tone and pace of government responses to national crises.

Despite internal disagreements, the DPP is largely united against a shared enemy: the Kuomintang Party. The KMT party opposes a strong push for Taiwanese independence. Instead, many in the KMT argue that strengthening ties with China is the best way forward. They believe friendlier relations and trade deals could deter China. The KMT-led legislature has cut funding across executive agencies, stalled the Constitutional Court, and expanded parliamentary oversight powers. While the DPP agrees on the need to push back, it must decide whether to prioritize

restoring institutional balance, rebuilding defense funding, or advancing domestic reform.

How aggressive Taiwan should be in pushing back against China's growing influence is another debated topic. Beijing has used military displays, propaganda, espionage, and overt threats in an attempt to weaken Taiwan's democracy. Some people believe that Taiwan must be more forceful in its pushback against Beijing. This means focusing on defense spending and strongly pushing for independence from China. However, there are more moderate factions of the DPP that endeavor to be more cautious on how strongly to push for independence. These factions tend to support focusing on domestic issues, believing that an aggressive push for independence could hurt Taiwan's trade with China or push the country closer to war.

Core DPP Political Leadership

The DPP currently controls Taiwan's Presidential Office. The core political leadership of the DPP is made up of powerful figures closest to President Lai. This includes President Lai Ching-te, Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim, Premier Cho Jung-tai, and other

key ministers. This bloc aligns with the "Trust-in-Lai" coalition and is fiercely loyal to the DPP's democratic identity. The bloc's ideology most closely aligns with the New Tide faction of the DPP, a pragmatic progressive wing that supports strengthening Taiwan's de facto autonomy and resisting PRC pressure without pursuing a formal declaration of independence. Members of this bloc view Taiwan's current situation as a democratic emergency, with the biggest threat being Chinese interference and cuts to the state's defense budget.

This bloc recognizes the importance of building up Taiwan's military capabilities and strengthening alliances with military and diplomatic allies. President Lai strongly condemned the KMT-controlled legislature for cutting the defense budget, believing defense investments are imperative not only to security but also to economic opportunities.²¹¹ Going forward, they seek to strengthen their relationships with democracies like the United States, Japan, and the EU.

While this bloc believes in avoiding open conflict and escalations, they believe in a strong foreign policy to counteract Chinese influence.²¹² These members recognize the urgent threat of Chinese influence, which

211 "Lai Calls for Public Support of Military Investment, Slams Opposition," FOCUS Taiwan, July 1, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202507010030

212 Chen Cheng-yu, "DPP Cautions on China Intervention in Recall Drives," *Taipei Times*, February 9, 2025, www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/02/09/2003831582?

threatens to sow discord in Taiwan and take the island down from the inside. The core leadership of the DPP recognizes the need to crack down on Chinese infiltration by punishing spies and stamping out PRC-engineered narratives circulating in Taiwan. However, in doing so, the DPP must be careful not to trample on the democratic values it seeks to protect. Members of this bloc may clash with some factions if they feel excessive militarization risks alienating allies or undermining Taiwan's democratic image.

Members Focused on Technology & Economic Development

Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party also contains a strong bloc of members who are businesspeople and economic ministers focused on Taiwan's economic development. These members view technological innovation as central to securing Taiwan's sovereignty and elevating its global standing. Members of this bloc include the TSMC Chairman and CEO Che Chia-wei, Minister of Economics Kuo Jyh-huei, CEO of Hon Hai Technology Group Young Liu, and other business-focused cabinet members. While many of these figures are not DPP government officials, they are aligned with overall DPP goals. They are best understood as external advisors or allies whose interests sometimes diverge from political

actors. Compared to other cabinet members, members of this bloc are more pragmatic and internationally focused.

The focus of this bloc is on ensuring Taiwan remains globally competitive in international markets. By remaining relevant in important industries, especially semiconductor manufacturing, Taiwan can attain leverage over its economic allies. The "silicon shield" created by Taiwan's semiconductor dominance creates an incentive for countries to protect Taiwan, as losing Taiwan's semiconductor manufacturing resources could result in global supply chains being disrupted.

Members generally align with the Tsai Ing-wen tradition of using private sector talent and investments to modernize Taiwan's economy. This bloc aims for private-sector innovation to modernize Taiwan's economy. Its members seek to protect sovereignty by deepening trade and investment ties while maintaining Taiwan's dominance in semiconductors and green technology.

Members Focused on National Security & Foreign Affairs

This bloc is comprised of members with strong international diplomatic experience and military experience, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Lin Chia-lung, the Minister of National Defense

Wellington Koo, the Secretary-General of the National Security Council Joseph Wu, the Director-General of the National Security Bureau Tsai Ming-yen, and other security-focused ministers. Compared to other blocs, these members feel more strongly about recruiting diplomatic allies and being assertive in defending Taiwan militarily and resisting PRC coercion. Members of this bloc are more closely aligned with the "deep green" faction of the DPP, favoring a firm stance on national sovereignty and skepticism toward compromise with Beijing. They see the KMT's engagement policy as dangerously naïve.²¹³

These members will focus on defending Taiwan against military threats and preserving diplomatic allies. In a time when China is making overt threats and running military drills, Taiwan's defense budget has been cut due to political infighting with the KMT. This not only hurts Taiwan's ability to invest in its own national security, but it also hurts Taiwan's standing with its potential military allies, who question how serious Taiwan is in defending itself. The members of this bloc have experience in foreign policy or security and will be sensitive to the ramifications of the Cabinet's actions on the island's security and on Taiwan's reputation with its allies abroad. The bloc recognizes the importance of preserving Taiwan's few remaining diplomatic allies as China seeks to poach them and how these few

213 Charlie Lyons Jones, "Taiwan: Tsai Ing-wen's Battle to Discipline the DPP," *The Interpreter*, January 8, 2019, www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/taiwan-tsai-ing-wen-s-battle-discipline-dpp.

remaining countries provide a thin line of defense against Chinese attacks on Taiwan's legitimacy. Military investment and innovation, as well as international allegiances, will be the main goals of this bloc, which sees the current crisis as a fight for the island's survival.

Members Focused on Courts and Law Enforcement

Many officials in Taiwan lean politically neutral and criticize party politics. This is especially true for cabinet members coming from the judiciary and law enforcement. Cabinet members in this bloc include the Prosecutor-General Hsing Tai-chao, Shieh Ming-yan of the Judicial Yuan, and the Minister of Justice Cheng Ming-chien. These members are not elected and avoid making political statements to the public. Their goal is to keep Taiwan safe, fair, and functional.

This bloc heavily supports the rule of law and following proper procedures. Independents support

investigating espionage and fraud, and they oppose investigations that are politically motivated. As a result, they insist on due process and strong evidence before taking action. They fight against civil servants being punished for political reasons or judges being pressured toward political goals. These officials want to preserve the judiciary and civil service's reputation as impartial. If the public sees them as loyal to one party or another, the entire legal system could lose legitimacy. Because of this, they will avoid flashy language or sweeping statements. Their communication style may be restrained and legalistic, which can frustrate more political ministers seeking faster action. They are likely to support compromise solutions that avoid escalation and keep institutions stable. At a time when many Taiwanese have lost faith in their government, they believe that transparency is the best way to rebuild public trust.

While members of the judiciary tend to prefer staying neutral, the role of the judiciary in Taiwan has

become increasingly politicized as Taiwan's Constitutional Court is stuck in a deadlock. The DPP wants to appoint new judges to the bench, but the KMT-led legislature refused to confirm them. This creates a situation where there are physically not enough judges to hold a proper quorum, meaning the courts cannot function. Whichever side is right, it is clear that one of Taiwan's key institutions is being used as a political tool.²¹⁴

This has prompted the judiciary to become more vocal in politics. The Judicial Yuan spoke out against the revision to rules around the Constitutional Court, and lawyers have mobilized to speak out against the reforms to Taiwan's court system.²¹⁵ This shows that while Taiwan's courts have managed to remain impartial in the past, now that they have been pulled into Taiwan's political infighting, members of the judicial branch must publicly defend institutional independence or risk seeing their credibility eroded.

COMMITTEE MISSION

Taiwan's Cabinet, formally known as the Executive Yuan, is the highest administrative branch of Taiwan. It is headed by the Premier (President of the Executive Yuan),

who is directly appointed by the President. Other members are appointed by the President upon the Premier's recommendation.²¹⁶ Under the Constitution, the

Executive Yuan and the Presidential Office are considered separate constitutional entities. However, the two work closely together, and the Executive Yuan often follows the

214 You Hai Lai, "Taiwan's Constitutional Crisis."

215 Wang Ting-chuan and Esme Yeh, "Lawyers march Against Constitutional Court Bills."

216 "Structure and Functions," *Executive Yuan*, english.ey.gov.tw/Page/E43650B2CB14861B.

general direction of the President, who holds the power to remove Executive Yuan ministers.²¹⁷ The Executive Yuan proposes policy and budgets, issues regulations, and executes law while remaining accountable to the Legislative Yuan. In Taiwan, the cabinet is primarily administrative and rarely advises the president directly.

Taiwan's current political context is unusually contentious. The Legislative Yuan's opposition-led majority has rapidly expanded legislative oversight powers and reallocated budgets, prompting protests and a surge of recall efforts against sitting legislators. Supporters describe these moves as rebalancing, but critics argue they strain checks

and balances. The result has been heightened institutional friction across branches.

President Lai has decided to bring together a diverse team to advise him on how to stabilize Taiwan and protect its sovereignty. This cabinet is composed of members whose roles are most relevant to Taiwan's political and military situation, including ministers, opposition lawmakers, and powerful citizens. Each cabinet member has been granted powers relevant to their office or organization. For ministers, this includes power over the agencies in their jurisdiction. The advisory committee will have the power to implement policies within Taiwan, and the decisions

made by the body will be binding when executed through existing legal mechanisms.

Amid shifting US signals and alliance priorities, American leadership has also become increasingly skeptical about its alliance with Taiwan. In light of this, the island must maintain existing relationships, forge new alliances, and carve out a place for itself in a changing world. With rising cross-strait tensions, Taiwan cannot afford to be fractured. China is poaching allies, using espionage, and threatening military action.²¹⁸ To stay independent, the diverse group of advisors in Taiwan's Cabinet must overcome their differences and unite against their common threats.²¹⁹

COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

Acting President of the Judicial Yuan: Shien Ming-yan

Shieh Ming-yan has served as the acting president of Taiwan's Judicial Yuan since November 1, 2024, following the departure of President Hsu Tzong-li and Vice President Tsai Jeong-duen at the end of their terms.²²⁰ Previously, he

was a distinguished legal scholar, holding a bachelor's in law and a master's in law from National Taiwan University (NTU), along with a Ph.D. from the University of Munich. He taught at NTU in 1990, later serving as dean of the College of Law. President Lai Ching-te appointed him amid legislative gridlock delaying the confirmation of new justices. Shieh

stepped in to ensure the continuity of Taiwan's judiciary under the Judicial Yuan Organization Act.²²¹ As one of the eight remaining justices, he continues presiding over constitutional court cases while the court awaits appointments. With the Judicial Yuan in paralysis, Shien will need to advocate for the judiciary and ensure that it can function effectively. Shien will be a

217 "Taiwan's Branches of Government," *Constitution.org*, November 1, 1997, constitution.org/1-Education/pd/gunning.050125/taiwan/branches.htm.

218 Nick Schiffrin and Dan Sagalyn, "With Future at Risk, Taiwan Prepares Citizens to Resist Potential Chinese Invasion," *Public Broadcasting Service*, April 7, 2025, www.pbs.org/newshour/show/with-future-at-risk-taiwan-prepares-citizens-to-resist-potential-chinese-invasion; Christopher Bodeen, "Taiwan's Leaders Say Tougher Measures Needed to Counter Stepped-Up Chinese Infiltration and Spying," *Associated Press*, March 13, 2025, apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-spying-president-lai-defenses-31be72adb44f826d265cdc17a6559cbd.

219 Kathrin Hille, "Taiwan Launches Unity Drive as China Threat Looms," *Financial Times*, June 22, 2025, <http://ft.com/content/cc7ddbe1-cd19-458f-b5e0-828593b03719>.

220 "President-Judicial-about Us-Principal Officers-President," Judicial, 2024, www.judicial.gov.tw/en/cp-1590-1190999-2bafa-2.html.

221 "President," Judicial Yuan, Accessed August 18, 2025, www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/5963404/

core part of protecting the judiciary in Taiwan and making sure that the public has faith in the legal system.

Chairman and CEO of Hon Hai Technology Group (Foxconn): Young Liu

Young Liu (Liu Yang-wei) is the chairman and CEO of Hon Hai Technology Group (Foxconn), the world's largest electronics manufacturer, a position he has held since 2019. An engineer-turned-entrepreneur, he earned a B.S. in Electrophysics from National Chiao Tung University (1978) and an M.S. in Computer Engineering from the University of Southern California (1986), then founded three tech startups before integrating with Foxconn.²²² Under his leadership, Foxconn has embraced an ambitious “3+3 strategy,” which includes electric vehicles, digital health, robotics, and core technologies like AI, semiconductors, and next gen communications.²²³ Liu's role as the head of Foxconn is critical in Taiwan's national security and economic policies since his company plays such a large role in global electronics supply chains. He will need to work closely with the Taiwanese government to help maintain their silicon shield. However, Liu will also need to look

for ways to protect his own business from the geopolitical risks in the region.

Chairman of Taiwan's Capital Management Corporation and Senior Advisor to the President: Lin Hsin-i

Lin Hsin-i is a seasoned business executive and independent technocrat, currently serving as chairman of Taiwan's Capital Management Corporation and senior advisor to the president. Before his current post, Lin served as Minister of Economic Affairs (2000–2002) and Vice Premier (2002–2004), and he also chaired the Council for Economic Planning and Development (now the National Development Council), as well as the Industrial Technology Research Institute. Before entering public service, he was the vice chairperson of China Motor Corporation and chairman of Tokio Marine News Insurance Corp. Ltd. In 2024, President Lai Ching-te appointed him as Taiwan's representative to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting in Peru due to his experience in international economic diplomacy. As a senior advisor, Lin will be focused on economic policy for Taiwan. His role as a representative

to APEC will be important for Taiwan's foreign economic policy along with supply chain protection.

Director-General of the National Immigration Agency: Chiu Feng-kuang (Frank Chiu)

Chiu Feng-kuang (also known as Frank Chiu) currently holds the position of Director-General at Taiwan's National Immigration Agency (NIA). This is a body under the Ministry of Interior responsible for immigration, border control, entry/exit services, and foreign registration. His previous career was in law enforcement, which spanned four decades. Chiu can be described as a technocrat, broadly avoiding political acts. While in law enforcement, he served in various roles. This includes the Hsinchu City police chief, the head of criminal investigation, and the commissioner of both the Beelung and Taipei City Police Departments. While serving in Taipei, he introduced mobile police stations to address local crime and launched a High Technology Crime Investigation Unit.²²⁴ In his current role, Chiu will be heavily focused on immigration from mainland China. While immigration is essential for Taiwan's economic growth, uncontrolled immigration could lead to a higher chance of foreign interference from the

²²² Hon Hai Technology Group (Foxconn). Accessed August 31, 2025, www.honhai.com/en-us.Hon

²²³ Hon Hai Technology Group (Foxconn).

²²⁴ Duncan DeAth, “President Appoints Interim Leader for Taiwan's Judiciary,” Taiwan News, Accessed November 1, 2024, www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2015/10/17/2003630271; Sean Lin, “Ko's Mobile Police Stations Under Fire from City Councilors,” *Taipei Times*, October 17, 2025, www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/12/10/2003660931.

CCP. As the director general, Chiu will need to make sure that the immigration system is not abused while still allowing for immigrants to enter the country.

Director-General of the National Security Bureau: Tsai Ming-yen

Tsai Ming-yen is a diplomat and expert in the study of armed conflict and war. While the director general of the NSB is traditionally held by former military officers, Tsai is the third civilian to hold the role.²²⁵ Before his appointment, he served as Taiwan's representative to the European Union and Belgium. He also served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, where he met with international partners, including the United States. As NSB Director-General, Tsai has focused on enhancing Taiwan's intelligence capabilities and strengthening its security. This means developing more sophisticated ways to collect intelligence on Taiwan's adversaries while also conducting counterintelligence operations domestically. He is actively involved in monitoring Chinese military activities near Taiwan and advocates maintaining a strong defense and intelligence network. Tsai's experience overseas also gives him unique access to international partners that are friendly to Taiwan.

Director-General of Taiwan's Tourism Administration: Chou Yung-hui

Chou Yung-hui serves as the first Director-General of Taiwan's Tourism Administration. A veteran of Taiwan's transport sector, Chou previously held leadership roles at the Taiwan Railways Administration and the Tourism Bureau, bringing his expertise in infrastructure and public service. As head of the Tourism Administration, he has spearheaded aggressive tourism recovery strategies, aiming to attract 10 million international visitors, boost visitor spending, expand service offerings like the Taiwan Tourist Shuttle, and elevate Taiwan's global tourism image through sustainability and market diversification. Under his leadership, the agency launched the "Taiwan—Waves of Wonder" campaign across the United States in mid-2024. This program promotes island-wide experiences like cycling tourism and digital engagement tools to reconnect Taiwan with the global travel market. With his focus on tourism, Chou will be looking into ways to use tourism as a way to strengthen Taiwan's soft power and cultural influence on the world. This could open new pathways for

Taiwan to gain favor around the world through the citizens of other countries.

Minister of Economics: Kuo Jyh-huei

Kuo Jyh-huei has served as Taiwan's Minister of Economic Affairs since May 20, 2024. An independent politician, Kuo was appointed by Premier Cho Jung-tai. Kuo holds a bachelor's degree from Cheng Shiu University along with a master's in business administration and a Ph.D. in business administration from National Taipei University. He co-founded Topco Scientific Company in 1990 and has held leadership roles in various organizations. As Minister of Economic Affairs, Kuo has been actively involved in discussions with international partners, including meetings with US officials to strengthen economic partnerships.²²⁶ Additionally, Kuo has been involved in allegations regarding the use of public funds for private business interests.²²⁷ Alongside the NDC, Kuo will be focused on the more long-term economic development of the country. This role will require Kuo to look into how Taiwan may want to diversify its economy while still remaining competitive in chip manufacturing.

²²⁵ Mercy A. Kuo, "Taiwan's New National Security Leadership," *The Diplomat*, May 29, 2024, thediplomat.com/2024/05/taiwans-new-national-security-leadership/.

²²⁶ Office of Texas Governor Greg Abbott, "Governor Abbott Hosts Taiwan Minister of Economic Affairs Kuo," news release, May 16, 2025, gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-hosts-taiwan-minister-of-economic-affairs-kuo.

²²⁷ "Economics Minister Denies Conflict of Interest Alleged in Media Report," *Focus Taiwan*, May 6, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202505060018.

Minister of Environment: Peng Chi-ming

Peng Chi-ming holds a Ph.D. in atmospheric sciences from National Central University and is renowned for founding Taiwan's first private weather company, WeatherRisk Explore, in 2003. His work in weather forecasting and climate risk management got him the nickname "Weatherman Supreme."²²⁸ As minister, Dr. Peng has been vital in advancing Taiwan's environmental policies, including the establishment of a cap-and-trade system, the launch of a Green Growth Fund, and efforts to secure over USD 1.5 billion in insurance funds for green energy projects. He is also a strong proponent of climate education. Peng recently announced online climate courses for high school students to inspire youth participation in climate initiatives.²²⁹ Peng holds a unique role in the cabinet and plays a role in both domestic and international policies. Domestically, Peng will need to balance the impact of economic development with Taiwan's very limited island resources. Additionally, he has an

opportunity to showcase Taiwan's role in combating climate change to the world and help increase Taiwan's footprint in the international community.

Minister of Finance: Chuang Tsui-yun

Chuang Tsui-yun has served as finance minister since January 2023. She is an independent politician who previously served as political deputy of finance. Chuang earned her bachelor's degree in land economics from National Chengchi University. After university, she served as chief secretary and director general at the National Property Administration and counselor at the Ministry of Finance.²³⁰ As finance minister, Chuang has been active in international forums, leading Taiwan's delegation at the 2024 APEC Finance Ministers' Meeting and protesting Taiwan's designation as "Taipei, China" at the Asian Development Bank.²³¹ She has also advocated for expanding Taiwan's National Financial Stabilization Fund to better respond to market fluctuations.²³² While Chuang may not be focused on economic development, her responsibility over the economic stability of

the country is equally important. Chuang also manages several state-owned enterprises like the Bank of Taiwan and the Export-Import Bank of the Republic of China. These state-owned enterprises are a crucial part of Taiwan's long-term economic policy and the management of investments in the country.

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Lin Chia-Lung

Lin is currently serving as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan. He assumed the position in May of 2024. Lin comes from an academic background and has a PhD from Yale and multiple master's degrees from Yale and National Taiwan University.²³³ Before he served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, he served as the Mayor of Taichung City and the Minister of Transportation and Communication.²³⁴ Now, in Lai's cabinet, Lin's lack of experience compared to other cabinet members may limit his influence in forging national policy.²³⁵ Lin has shown himself to be an active spokesperson for Taiwan internationally, conducting frequent diplomatic trips to the United States, Tokyo,

228 "Weather Watchers Try to Overcome Nature," Taiwan Today, September 14, 2007, taiwantoday.tw/AMP/culture/top-news/24138/weather-watchers-try-to-overcome-nature.

229 Esme Yeh, "Ministry Launches High-School Climate Courses," *Taipei Times*, August 18, 2025, "www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/08/18/2003842237."

230 "About the Minister of Finance," Ministry of Finance, accessed August 18, 2025, www.mof.gov.tw/Eng/singlehtml/270?cntId=758d81805af44aa989694ae3df4d1c67&.

231 "Finance Minister Protests Taiwan Designation at ADB," *Overseas Community Affair Council of Taiwan*, May 9, 2025, www.ocac.gov.tw/OCAC/Eng/Pages/Detail.aspx?nodeid=329&pid=75269546.

232 "Finance Minister Open to Stabilization Fund Expansion," *Focus Taiwan*, April 16, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/business/202504160008.

233 "H.E. Dr. Lin Chia-Lung," YuShan Forum: Asian Dialogue for Innovation and Progress, March 17, 2025, www.yushanforum.org/people.php?pid=1277.

234 "Minister Lin Chia-Lung," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan)*, accessed August 18, 2025, en.mofa.gov.tw/MofaLeader_Content.aspx?n=1281&m=138.

235 Jono Thomson, "Taiwan's New Foreign Minister Unlikely to Bring Big Policy Changes, Scholar Says," *Taiwan News*, May 13, 2024, www.taiwannews.com.tw/news/5684057.

and other allies.²³⁶ He has also expressed a willingness to start a dialogue with the People's Republic of China despite current tensions.²³⁷ As the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lin will be integral in Taiwan's foreign policy as it navigates the changing geopolitical landscape. Some of his major priorities will be focused on continuing to develop Taiwan-American relations. Additionally, Lin will be Taiwan's main representative to the international world. This is crucial as Taiwan is becoming more diplomatically isolated from other countries over time.

Minister of Justice: Cheng Ming-chien

Before his appointment as Minister of Justice, Cheng held many key government positions within the ministry, including Director-General of the Agency Against Corruption. Cheng is known as a career prosecutor. After graduating from National Chung Hsing University with a bachelor's in law, Cheng served as a chief prosecutor across Taiwan, including Tainan, Yunlin, and Taipei.²³⁸ Cheng is known as an advocate for judicial reforms, anti-corruption measures, transparency,

and a general advocate for the Ministry of Justice. In this role, Cheng will be focused on ensuring that the government is prosecuting individuals for breaking the law. This will extend to foreigners who may try to create internal divisions within the country. The ministry will also be focused on internal government affairs to make sure that corruption is not being committed.

Minister of Mainland Affairs Council: Chiu Chui-chen

Chiu Chui-chen is a political scientist and the current Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC). Dr. Chiu earned his Ph.D. in political science from National Taiwan Normal University in 2007. His doctoral dissertation focused on "The Construction of a Peaceful Integration Model Across the Taiwan Strait."²³⁹ Previously, he served in lower roles in the MAC, along with teaching at National Quemoy University. He has emphasized Taiwan's sovereignty and the importance of dialogue with China while also addressing concerns over China's integration strategies in Taiwan's outlying islands, such as Kinmen and

Matsu. He has been vocal about resisting China's "united front" tactics and has worked closely with local governments to counteract these efforts.²⁴⁰ Dr. Chui will be focused on cross-strait relations and looking into ways to strike a balance between protecting Taiwan's national interests while maintaining calm relations with China. His role will be important if Taiwan and China were to conduct talks or have any diplomatic interaction.

Minister of National Defense: Li-Hsiung (Wellington) Koo

Wellington Koo has served as Taiwan's Minister of National Defense since May 2024. He is a former lawyer and the first civilian to hold the position of Secretary-General of the National Security Council. Wellington was educated at National Taiwan University and New York University. He has a distinguished legal career, representing high-profile clients such as former presidents Tsai Ing-wen and Chen Shui-bian. As defense minister, Koo prioritized reforms to modernize Taiwan's military. This included restructuring the reserve force, training, and strategic partnerships.²⁴¹ His

236 "Taiwan's Foreign Minister Defies China's Reaction with Strategic Japan Visit," *Devdiscourse*, August 14, 2025, www.devdiscourse.com/article/international/3541678-taiwans-foreign-minister-defies-chinas-reaction-with-strategic-japan-visit.

237 Ben Blanchard, "China Can't Decide Whether We Are a Country, Taiwan Foreign Minister Says," *Reuters*, May 21, 2025, www.reuters.com/world/china/china-cant-decide-whether-we-are-country-taiwan-foreign-minister-says-2025-05-21.

238 "New Education, Justice, and Culture Ministers Announced," *Focus Taiwan*, April 12, 2024, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202404120006.

239 "Formulating the Peaceful Integration Patterns Across the Taiwan Strait," National Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations in Taiwan, accessed August 17, 2025, ndltd.ncl.edu.tw/cgi-bin/gs32/gsweb.cgi/login?o=dnclcdr&s=id=%22095NTNU5227015%22.&searchmode=basic.

240 Chen Yu-fu and Lery Hiciano, "MAC Accuses Chian of Pushing Integration Agenda in Matsu, Kinmen," *Taipei Times*, May 9, 2025, www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2025/05/09/2003836605.

241 Wei-Chung Chen, "Military Reforms in Taiwan: What's Behind the New Civilian Minister of National Defense?" Central European Institute of Asian Studies, October 17, 2024, ceias.eu/military-reforms-in-taiwan-whats-behind-the-new-civilian-minister-of-national-defense/.

ministry has spoken out against laws passed by the opposition party requiring cuts in defense spending. He's warned that these budget cuts will have serious impacts on the island's security.²⁴² As defense minister, Koo will be challenged by an increasingly militarized China. The development of newer missiles in mainland China, along with the rising threat of a blockade, will require Koo to rethink Taiwan's defensive strategy.

Minister of the Interior: Liu Shyh Fang

Liu Shyh-fang has served as Taiwan's Minister of the Interior since May 20, 2024. A member of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Liu previously represented Kaohsiung's 3rd district in the Legislative Yuan from 2016 to 2024. Her extensive public service includes roles as deputy mayor of Kaohsiung, managing director of the 2009 World Games Organizing Committee, and secretary general of the Executive Yuan.²⁴³ As Interior Minister, Liu oversees national security, immigration, civil affairs, and disaster response, playing a pivotal role in shaping Taiwan's domestic policies. She champions public safety, civic engagement, and maintaining Taiwan's sovereignty.

Minister of the National Development Council: Palu Liu

Palu Liu (Liu Chin-ching) serves as the Minister of the National Development Council (NDC) in Taiwan's Executive Yuan, a role he assumed on May 20, 2024. Before entering government, Liu built his career at IBM Taiwan, rising to director of the global business services division. He then transitioned to the private sector as vice chairman and chairman of PwC Consulting in Taiwan. Academically, he holds a bachelor's in applied mathematics from Chung Yuan University and an MBA from National Taiwan University. As NDC minister, Liu champions Taiwan's strategic positioning in artificial intelligence and semiconductors, spearheading initiatives like overseas startup hubs and talent recruitment to reinforce economic development and global competitiveness.²⁴⁴ As minister, Liu's focus will be on ensuring that Taiwan's economy can be protected and sustained in both the short and long term. Liu will need to focus on continuing to attract foreign investment opportunities while also looking at ways to protect some of the most important companies to Taiwan's economy.

Minister of Transportation and Communications: Chen Shih-kai

Chen Shih-kai is a member of the Democratic Progressive Party. Before his role as Minister of Transportation and Communications, Chen was the spokesperson of the Executive Yuan, a role that included effectively communicating government policies. He also served as the councilor of Taichung City. Chen has a background in both politics and business management. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Tunghai University and an Executive MBA from the National Taipei University of Technology. As minister, Chen has focused on enhancing Taiwan's transportation infrastructure and promoting tourism.²⁴⁵ These responsibilities are important as Taiwan continues to develop its defense infrastructure. Without a strong transportation network, Taiwan could have difficulty moving soldiers and equipment across the island in the event of an invasion.

242 "Taiwan Defence Ministry Warns of 'Serious Impact' to Security Under New Funding Laws," *The Strait Times*, December 26, 2024, www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/taiwan-defence-ministry-warns-of-serious-impact-to-security-under-new-funding-laws.

243 "About Minister," Ministry of the Interior, Accessed August 18, 2025, www.moi.gov.tw/english/cp.aspx?n=7603&.

244 Taipei Times, "AI Has Become a Second Vital Industry in Taiwan: NDC Head," *Semiconductor Packaging News*, accessed August 31, 2025, www.semiconductorpackagingnews.com/news/86100.html.

245 "Transportation Ministry to Build, Improve 80km of Sidewalks," *Focus Taiwan*, March 5, 2025, focustaiwan.tw/society/202503050020; "Cabinet Spokesman Chen Shih-kai Named New Transportation Minister," *Focus Taiwan*, August 29, 2024, focustaiwan.tw/politics/202408290006.

Premier: Cho Jung-Tai

Cho Jung-tai has served as Taiwan's premier since May 2024. Cho is an experienced political figure, starting his career on the Taipei City Council in 1990.²⁴⁶ Later, he was elected to the Legislative Yuan, where he served as Secretary-General of the Executive Yuan and Deputy Secretary-General of the President during the Chen Shui-bian administration. He went on to be the DPP chairman from 2019 to 2020. Cho is known for campaigning on serving the public interest, cross-party collaboration, and proactive governance.²⁴⁷ As the premier, Cho will be focused on the administration of the government. This involves making sure that the various ministries in the Executive Yuan are carrying out their duties. His role will focus more on the domestic situation in Taiwan, ranging from internal security to domestic political issues. Cho's role also reports to the Legislative Yuan, where he must provide reports on the status of the ministries in the Executive Yuan. As a result, Cho will likely be working closely with legislators to ensure that policies can be voted on and passed within the Legislative Yuan.

Prosecutor-General of Taiwan's Supreme Prosecutor's Office: Hsing Tai-Chao

Hsing Tai-Chao heads the highest prosecution authority in Taiwan. He oversees national prosecutorial affairs.²⁴⁸ He is a veteran prosecutor with over three decades of experience. He previously served as chief across multiple district and high-level offices (including Taipei, Kaohsiung, Pingtung, Yunlin, Hualien, and Kinmen) as well as the Political Deputy Minister of Justice. When he was nominated and confirmed by the Legislative Yuan, Hsing promised to uphold judicial independence and public trust in the justice system.²⁴⁹ He has led initiatives including cracking down on vote-buying, election interference, and cyber threats, including disinformation.²⁵⁰ Going forward, Hsing will be confronted with both internal challenges and challenges from mainland China. The paralysis of the constitutional court and the lack of support from the Legislative Yuan will be a unique challenge for upholding the rule of law. Hsing will also need

to confront increased interference from the CCP by combating corruption and foreign spying.

Secretary-General of the National Security Council: Joseph Wu

Joseph Wu has served in various offices. He served as the Secretary-General of the National Security Council, Taiwan's Representative to the US, and the Head of the Mainland Affairs Council and was Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2018 to 2024. In this role, he oversaw meetings, hosted diplomatic visitors, and expanded the department's social media presence.²⁵¹ He also gave frequent English interviews to foreign media to make the case for Taiwan's sovereignty and global recognition.²⁵² As of May 2024, Wu has returned to his former position as the Secretary-General of the National Security Council. Wu has spoken out against budget cuts to national defense, warning that the cuts will lead to serious consequences and send the wrong messages to Taiwan's allies.²⁵³ In this role, Wu will be focused on the overall national security of Taiwan. This would include a mixture of domestic and foreign defense policy.

²⁴⁶ "Cho Jung-Tai," DBpedia, accessed August 17, 2025, dbpedia.org/page/Cho_Jung-tai.

²⁴⁷ "Incoming Premier Cho Jung-Tai Pledges Innovative and Proactive Approaches to Address the Public's Most Pressing Needs," Executive Yuan, accessed August 17, 2025, english.ey.gov.tw/Page/61BF20C3E89B856/c813cce9-7c08-455e-a128-81102c688bf8.

²⁴⁸ Jason Pan, "Hsing Tao-Chao Assumes Prosecutor-General Post," *Taipei Times*, May 10, 2022, www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2022/05/10/2003778002.

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²⁵⁰ Wang Ting-Chuan and Jason Pan, "Six Offices to be Established to Deal with Cyberthreats," *Taipei Times*, September 15, 2023, www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2023/09/15/2003806254.

²⁵¹ Julia Bergstrom, "Meet Joseph Wu, Taiwan's Longest-Serving Foreign Minister," *Taiwan Business Topics*, June 20, 2024, topics.amcham.com.tw/2024/06/meet-joseph-wu-taiwans-longest-serving-foreign-minister/.

²⁵² Jono Thomson, "Taiwan's New Foreign Minister Unlikely to Bring Big Policy Changes, Scholar Says."

²⁵³ "Taiwan Defence Ministry Warns of 'Serious Impact' to Security Under New Funding Laws."

Wu will need to help strengthen Taiwan's national defenses while coordinating with allies overseas to provide Taiwan with the protection it needs.

TSMC Chairman and CEO: C.C. Wei

Che-Chia Wei joined TSMC in 1998 and currently serves as the chairman and CEO of the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, the world's largest contract chip maker. He is known for his strategic foresight and technical depth and has gained strong influence in the semiconductor industry. Recently, TSMC has partnered with companies to bring about the next round of AI innovation.²⁵⁴ TSMC is key to maintaining Taiwan's silicon shield. However, the TSMC acts with a degree of independence from Taiwan's government. Recently, the TSMC announced heavy investment into the US, and TSMC must balance expansion with protecting Taiwan's security.²⁵⁵ In this role, Che will need to carefully balance the role of his company in Taiwan's domestic and foreign policy. While foreign diversification is important to manage risk, TSMC still remains as Taiwan's most valuable exporter and will need to take its role in the domestic economy into consideration.

Vice President: Hsiao Bi-khim

Hsiao Bi-khim was born in Japan to a Taiwanese father and American mother. She has served as Taiwan's vice president since May 2024.

Before this, she represented Taiwan in the United States from 2020 to 2023, becoming the first Taiwanese official to attend a US presidential inauguration since 1979. Hsiao is an accomplished diplomat and helped strengthen US-Taiwan relations and trade. In March 2024, Hsiao was the subject of a failed assassination attempt by the CCP, involving a planned car collision in Prague.²⁵⁶ Hsiao is a member of the Democratic Progressive Party. Previously, she served multiple terms in Taiwan's Legislative Yuan, where she focused on foreign affairs and defense.²⁵⁷ Hsiao's focus as vice president will be on the national defense and international relations of Taiwan. As vice president, she is second in line as the head of state and supports the president in representing Taiwan at home and abroad. It will be her primary responsibility to look for ways to protect Taiwan's sovereignty while making sure that the country stays united.

²⁵⁴ "Dr. C. C. Wei," Analytics Insight, accessed August 18, 2025, www.analyticsinsight.net/biography/dr-c-c-wei.

²⁵⁵ "Taiwan Says Chipmaker's Move to Invest \$100 billion in the US Wasn't Because of US Pressure," Associated Press, March 6, 2025, apnews.com/article/taiwan-us-tsmc-chips-investment-71d3aeb2bc403a92ce8eccdd8c51c0c8.

²⁵⁶ Helen Davidson, "China 'Planned Car Collision' During Taiwan Vice-President's Visit to Prague," *The Guardian*, June 28, 2025, www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/28/taiwan-vice-president-undeterred-after-czech-reports-of-alleged-chinese-car-collision-plot?.

²⁵⁷ "Bi-khim Hsiao," Hudson Institute, accessed August 18, 2025, www.hudson.org/experts/bi-khim-hsiao.

RESEARCH AND PREPARATION QUESTIONS

The following research and preparation questions are meant to help you begin your research on your country's policy. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

Topic A

1. How can the Taiwanese Cabinet combat misinformation among the public while preserving Taiwan's democratic liberties?
2. How will the DPP-controlled Cabinet navigate partisan conflicts with the KMT controlled legislature to ensure that they are able to gain funding for their endeavors?
3. With only twelve formal diplomatic allies remaining, how much is Taiwan willing to invest in retaining the formal diplomatic support of these remaining countries?
4. How will Taiwan maintain its dominance in the semiconductor industry while balancing its relations with strategic allies?
5. How should the Cabinet mitigate encroachment from China, addressing Beijing's United Front strategy, to defend Taiwanese sovereignty from cognitive warfare?
6. How will the Cabinet address the question of sovereignty over the islands of Taiwan, especially those with historical and growing ties to China (Kinmen and Matsu), and tackle CCP influence in such areas?
7. How will the Taiwanese Cabinet form new international relations, improve past alliances, or gather international support in its plight to remain independent?
8. How can the Taiwanese Cabinet navigate internal issues among its government while still maintaining its presence in international affairs?

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

Topic A

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