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KMT Chairman Faces Headwinds from Unification Wing as He Prepares to Visit Washington

By: Russell Hsiao

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With his support rating hovering in the low single digits in some opinion polls to become the country's next president, the embattled chairman of Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) Eric Chu (朱立倫) is planning a long-awaited and important visit to the United States. Starting on June 1 and lasting 12 days, Chu's visit will include several cities in the United States and is intended to formally relaunch the party's office in Washington, DC, as well as to assure US policymakers, and rally expatriates in the United States to support the KMT. Issues that will undoubtedly be on the table in discussions with US policymakers in Washington are the KMT's approach to cross-Strait relations, its defense policy, and its ability to maintain cross-Strait peace in an era of increased tension. The new chairman is facing challenging political headwinds internally as he tries to sell his pitch to Washington: in addition to his low support rating, significant differences between factions within the Party on its approach to cross-Strait relations and with the United States—differences that emerged during the KMT chairmanship primary—show no sign of abating. Whether the chairman is able to maintain his grip on power will be a determining factor as to whether he can successfully implement his preferred policy approaches.

According to an opinion poll conducted by the pan-Green-leaning *My Formosa* (美麗島電子報) released in April, support for Chu to be the next president of Taiwan stood at only 3.2 percent (down from 5.2 percent in the previous survey in February). Perhaps a more troubling indicator from this poll is that the KMT chairman does not appear to have much support from even within his own party, with only 6.2 percent of those who identified as leaning politically towards the KMT expressing their support for his candidacy. Moreover, the percentage of people who somewhat distrust or strongly distrust Chu were

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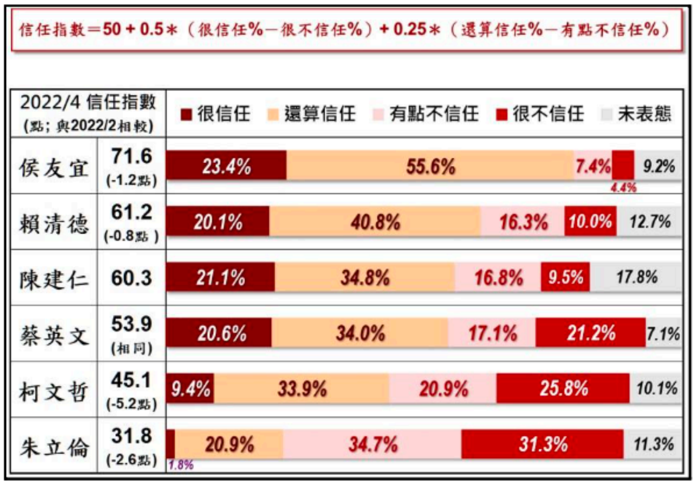
34.7 percent and 31.3 percent, respectively, which are the highest among the political figures included in the survey *(see graphic below)*. In the same poll, the percentage of those holding favorable views of the KMT reached a new low of 22.5 percent, while the percentage of those having negative views were at a high of 59.9 percent.



Graphic: Relative levels of expressed trust for major political figures in Taiwan. In this survey, Eric Chu ranked last of the six figures included in the poll, with 66 percent of respondents indicating either "somewhat do not trust" or "deeply mistrust." (Graphic Source: My Formosa)

New Chairman, Same Troubles

The troubles facing the new KMT chairman appear to be a result of structural issues within the party, with a core base of the party asserting itself despite its growing detachment from the mainstream attitudes of Taiwanese society. Consequently, a little over half a year into his new term as chairman, Chu is facing similar challenges to those who held the position before him.

Chu took over from Johnny Chiang (江啟臣) as the party's 10th directly elected chairman in October 2021. His tepid win in the primary race, which saw him receive 45.78 percent of votes—compared to the 32.59 percent who voted for pro-unification candidate Chang Ya-chung (張亞中)—foreshadowed the challenges facing him now. Fissures over the orientation of the party—between those who favor closer relations with China and those who favor closer relations with the United States—have been building since at least 2016, when former President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) stepped down with no unifying leader to take his place. KMT infighting between the establishment and anti-establishment wings of the party, which had previously been kept carefully under wraps by party elders, broke out into the open during the contentious 2016 presidential campaign.

When Chiang took over as chairman in March 2020, the KMT had just lost its second consecutive presidential election to the incumbent president, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨). The writing on the wall then was clear: the KMT had to change course if it wished to remain politically viable. Chiang saw it as his task to steer the party through the colossal task of revising the party platform. Singularly focused on the reform platform, Chiang oversaw the creation of the KMT Reform Committee (國民黨改革委員會) and sought to bring more youths into the political fold. In doing so, however, he apparently failed to solidify support from KMT elders and did not unify the factions of the party. Less of a maverick than his immediate predecessor and with more political support from the old guard, Chu was seen as the natural establishment favorite to strike a balance between placating the party elders and undertaking reforms within the party. Accordingly, Chu comfortably bested Chiang in the race for chairman in September 2021. Yet, a little over six months into his term, Chu appears to be struggling to implement the reforms and is facing growing angst from within—especially from the party's unification wing.

Growing Angst from the KMT's Unification Wing

The pro-unification faction of the KMT has become increasingly uneasy with Chu's outreach to the United States. In a recent media interview, the runner-up in the 2021 KMT chairman race, Chang Ya-chung, called on Chu to step down as chairman of the KMT if the party does not perform well in the upcoming local elections in November 2022. According to Chang, Chu promised to win 16 seats in the nine-in-one election to be held later this year and stated that the chairman should step down if he does not meet this goal. Chang added that he would run again for the chairmanship position if that should occur.

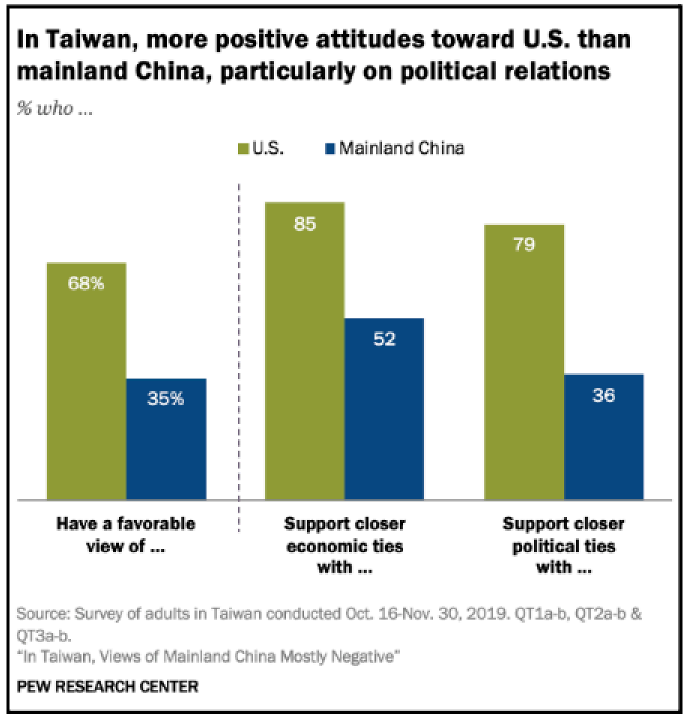
Indicative of the KMT unification wing's broader concerns and with the chairman's upcoming visit in mind, Chang argued that the KMT should spend the same amount of time dealing with cross-Strait relations as it does with the United States. In pursuit of this, he added that the KMT should set up offices throughout China, which would be as important as the representative office in the United States. Chang also lamented how countries like India, Israel, Hungary, and the Arab states were defending their own national interests in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine by not siding with the United States—suggesting that Taiwan should similarly put its own national interests first and not align so closely with the United States.

These views espoused by Chang represent the increasingly assertive conservative wing of the party, which is aligned with firebrand former chairwoman, Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱). It is instructive that while Chu prepares for his Washington trip, Hung flew to Zhejiang and spoke at the 5th Cross-Strait Youth Development Forum (第五屆海峽兩岸青年發展論壇) in Hangzhou. In her keynote speech on May 11, Hung mostly parroted Beijing's propaganda on Taiwan, stating, among other things, that cross-Strait integration is an "irresistible historical trend" (不可阻擋的歷史趨勢).

The political challenges facing Eric Chu—in particular the tensions between the pro-China and pro-US factions—are reflective of deeper tensions within both the party and Taiwanese society as a whole *(see Pew survey below)*. This division was captured in a 2020 Pew Research Survey Poll about Taiwanese perceptions toward China and the United States. Indeed, among those identifying as KMT supporters, 57 percent expressed favorable views of the United States, whereas 66 percent expressed favorable views with China. By comparison, among respondents identifying as DPP, 82 percent expressed a favorable view of the United States, whereas 14 percent expressed a favorable view of Mainland China.

Widening Gulf between the KMT Base and Mainstream Public Opinion

Eric Chu represents the moderate, pro-US wing of the KMT, and may currently be the only leader capable of unifying the various powerful factions within the Party in a national election to compete against the DPP in 2024. Yet, as recent trends show, the power of the KMT chairman has gradually diminished, while Chang's continued relevance—which can be viewed in part as an extension of the Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) phenomenon—also shows that the anti-establishment and pro-unification wings remain prominent features in the party's internal politics. The growing angst of the increasingly vocal unification wing of the KMT could potentially pull the party away from the mainstream of public opinion.



Graphic: Taiwanese public opinion toward the United States and China. (Graphic Source: Pew Research)

Electoral strategists within the KMT may hope that the chairman's upcoming visit to the United States will help him get a much-needed boost in the polls from a perceived endorsement from Washington. In turn, this could be used to assure voters and supporters that the KMT—rather than the DPP—is the more responsible party for managing cross-Strait relations and keeping the peace in the Taiwan Strait. However, given the internal dynamics of the party, a successful US trip may not necessarily buoy his support back within the party's increasingly polarized body politic—parts of which could perceive him as leaning too heavily on the United States.

The reality is that Chu—and any future KMT chairman for that matter—faces a party base that is increasingly detached from the mainstream of Taiwanese public opinion. The chairman will need to strike a balance between the preferences of this base and those of the broader population in order to maintain control of the party and to win general elections. Yet, this balancing act will become increasingly difficult as the gulf widens between the views of the KMT's base and mainstream public opinion. These tensions will make Chu's task in persuading Washington all the more challenging.

The main point: The new KMT chairman is facing challenging political headwinds from the party's unification wing as he tries to sell his pitch to Washington. Ultimately, whether the chairman is able to maintain his grip on power will determine whether he can successfully implement his preferred policy approach.

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China's Missteps Open Up New Avenues for Taiwan's Values-Based Trade in Europe

By: Eric Chan

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The Russian invasion of Ukraine is "one of the worst strategic decisions any leader of a powerful country has made in decades," stated American political scientist Ian Bremmer. Yet, Russian President Vladimir Putin is not alone in his demonstration of poor strategic decision-making. Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping (習近平) has also demonstrated remarkably poor judgment through his inflexible backing for Putin's "special military operation." In this article, I will discuss why Xi has supported Putin's invasion, as well as the long-term implications of this support for People's Republic of China (PRC) relations with Europe. Given Xi's ideological commitment to supporting Putin—combined with the CCP's draconian zero-COVID policies—Taiwan has an opening to wage a wider diplomatic-economic offensive under the concept of *values-based trade*.

The goal of such an offensive would not be to earn empty, symbolic victories of official diplomatic recognition. Instead, Taiwan's goals should be to break PRC elite capture, develop countervailing markets to insulate both Taiwan and its partners from economic pressure, and set conditions for European assistance to Taiwan (as well as sanctions on the PRC) if Xi ever ordered an outright invasion. In short, Taiwan can vastly speed up *existing trends* within the European Union to favor increased trade and engagement with Taiwan, as opposed to the PRC. On a broader note, Putin's illegal and unprovoked invasion—as well as the economic decoupling resulting from Western nations rightfully cutting off trade with Russia—provides an opening to restructure the global economy to favor trade between democracies instead of empowering autocracies. To paraphrase one of Xi's favorite statements, these are indeed "great changes unseen in a century" (百年未有之大變). Yet, with careful Taiwanese diplomatic engagement, these changes need not necessarily favor the Chinese Communist Party.

Ideology and the War Abroad

The extent to which ideology has hobbled the PRC's diplomatic apparatus was already clear prior to the Russia-Ukraine War, given the prevalence of "wolf warrior" diplomacy. Yet, analysts were expecting some modicum of moderation given Xi's call for a "lovable China" (努力塑造可信,可愛,可敬的中國形象) and the public comments by Cui Tiankai (崔天凱), the previous PRC ambassador to the United States, criticizing the state of PRC diplomacy. The war, however, has further demonstrated that the inflexible, ideologically driven nature of PRC diplomacy is clearly being driven from the top.

In the three months prior to the war, the United States made numerous appeals to the PRC, reportedly including intelligence sharing, in hopes of getting Xi to put pressure on Putin to stop the planned invasion. The PRC not only rebuffed American appeals, but also shared the information with the Russians. On February 4—twenty days prior to the war—Xi and Putin announced a "no-limits" strategic partnership, codified in a "Joint Statement on the International Relations Entering a New Era and the Global Sustainable Development." This statement is extraordinary in how it laid down a multi-front challenge to the West, and specifically the United States. Ideological competition is prioritized.

In the very first section, it asserts the superiority of Russian and Chinese "democracy." The document then heavily borrows from CCP (and not Russian) propaganda, listing first the "protection of their core interests, state sovereignty and territorial integrity, [and] oppos[ing] interference by external forces in their internal affairs," followed by the assertion that "the Russian side reaffirms its support for the One-China principle, confirms that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, and opposes any forms of independence of Taiwan." Finally, both sides mentioned their serious concerns over US bioweapon and chemical activity, a mainstay of the PRC's COVID propaganda seeking to deflect blame for the pandemic.

This document has been the core framework for PRC diplomatic actions since the start of the war. One day prior to the invasion, PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying (華春瑩) accused the United States of "creating fear and panic" regarding the threat of war. On April 1, European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen held a virtual summit with Xi, urging him to assist in ending the war. Xi's response was notably hamfisted, stating that the European Union was acting as a puppet of the Americans, while refusing to even acknowledge that there was an invasion or a war going on. Bilateral engagement has had the same result. In Xi's May phone calls with French President Macron and German Chancellor Scholz, Xi has continued to talk about Europeans taking "security issues into their own hands," implying that these issues are controlled by others. This theme is rampant within Russian propaganda; but Xi's repeated use of such phrasing is an indicator that this is not merely shared propaganda, but a reflection of shared beliefs. Extensive PRC propaganda and disinformation support to Russia will not likely change in the future.

These actions are thus doubly insulting to the Europeans: first, they imply that the PRC views European relations largely through the lens of US-PRC competition, and that Europeans are seen collectively as a US puppet; second, they obviously prioritize the Russia-PRC "no-limits" partnership above that of the EU partnership. Moreover, the inability of PRC diplomacy to come to even a temporary understanding with the Europeans on the issues of interests and values is worsened by the immense supply chain disruptions arising from the PRC's zero-COVID policy.

Ideology and the War at Home

The PRC is currently undergoing its largest COVID outbreak since the beginning of the pandemic, with significant economic disruption across most major cities. Yet the current issues with supply chain disruptions do not arise from the actual virulence of COVID, given the relative mildness of the Omicron variant. Instead, supply chain disruptions are a result of the party's insistence on a "zero-COVID" strategy involving mass lockdowns. For the party, zero-COVID has political and ideological objectives beyond virus control. These objectives include showing the discipline of the party under Xi's leadership, demonstrating the independence of Chinese science, and contrasting the discipline of the Chinese people with that of alleged "Western chaos." Given these incentives, the party will continue the zero-COVID strategy via its existing policy of "dynamic clearance," aimed at containing and clearing outbreaks at all costs.

Strict population mobility controls will likely continue past the 20th Party Congress expected this autumn. In Shanghai's case, despite reported falling caseloads, factory workers and apartment residents were placed into sudden lockdown, and subject to forced-entry disinfection or "silent periods," in which even food deliveries are banned. Second, the reduced effectiveness against Omicron of PRC inactivated vaccines like Sinovac—and the PRC insistence against using "Western" vaccines—means that the easiest method of reducing severe COVID cases quickly through effective mRNA vaccines is politically off the table (at least until the PRC develops and deploys its own mRNA vaccines).

A third factor is the new strict system of regulations within the PRC economic system. Prior to the latest COVID outbreak, the CCP had begun an extensive crackdown on multiple segments of the PRC economy, to include tech, education, and real estate. With the economic disruptions from these regulations and the lockdowns, the party has responded through a combination of loosened monetary policy and a "shadow stimulus" of loosened bank lending and local government spending. All of these factors have made the PRC a significantly riskier and less stable place in which to invest, and Europe is taking notice.

Image: Summary results of a European Chamber poll of European businesses in the PRC, May 2022. COVID quarantine disruptions and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war have made the PRC a far less attractive destination for investment. (Image Source: European Chamber Twitter)

Opportunities for Taiwan to Go on the Diplomatic Offense

In the recent past, PRC bullying of Eastern European countries has sometimes allowed Taiwan to push values-based diplomacy and trade with the European Union, as seen in Taiwan's response to PRC pressure against Lithuania. Yet, Taiwan has had to stretch itself: while Taiwan's dominance of the semiconductor market is extremely potent, there are limits to what the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) and an enthusiastic but relatively small Taiwanese consumer market can accomplish—if the European Union simply considered volume of PRC trade to Taiwan trade, with no consideration of other factors such as values and the long-term political risk of economic capture. This was the unfortunate condition prior to February 2022, where despite Taiwan taking extra effort to counteract PRC pressure, the Lithuanian President still felt compelled to state that the fight with the PRC had been a "mistake", with the EU only providing soft support to Lithuania and Taiwan.

However, the confluence of an extremely unpopular PRC "no-limits partnership" with Russia, as well as CCP-induced supply chain disruptions, means that Taiwan has an opening to push not just values-based diplomacy but also *values-based trade* on a broader scale. For instance, the previous German policy of *Wandel durch Handel* ("change through trade") has been badly discredited through association with the similar terms of *Russlandversteher* / *Putinversteher* ("Russia understander / Putin understander") after the Russian invasion. The European Union is now systematically ridding itself of trade with Russia, with considerations of domestic economic disruption fading in comparison to the necessity of punishing Russia as the invasion of Ukraine continues and evidence of war crimes mount. The closeness of the PRC to Russia is now prompting European capitals to at least *begin* considering how to reduce reliance on PRC trade.

Even more importantly, PRC supply chain disruptions and risks to business as a result of autocratic decisions mean that financial incentives also align with the moral incentives. This means there is a relatively short window for Taiwan to advertise itself as a reliable, democratic substitute for PRC trade, or even as a regional middleman to EU attempts to foster greater trade relationships with Japan. Given this rare opportunity, Taiwan should seek to prioritize its diplomatic and economic efforts to focus on Europe.

To take advantage of this situation, Taiwan should take a systematic, microeconomics-based approach to incentivize the key European companies most badly affected by the supply chain disruptions to move manufacturing or design to Taiwan. For instance, the Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, 外交部) could work with organizations like the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TETDC, 外貿協會) to develop a series of bilateral trade investment campaigns, both at the national and company level. This campaign could be complemented with a diplomatic push for cooperation similar to what Taiwan previously executed with the New Southbound Policy (NSP, 新南向政策), which included elements of trade, technology, agriculture, medicine, education, and tourism cooperation. At the national level, European firms seeking to off-shore from the PRC could be granted tax incentives, similar to a previous Taiwan Ministry of Finance investment repatriation program.

While French and German companies are the most obvious and lucrative targets, it is worth noting that expanded Taiwan outreach to Ukraine would have significant security incentives as well: pre-war, Ukraine was the PRC's second-largest arms supplier. Economically, 50 percent of the world's neon supply—critical for semiconductor production—comes from Ukraine. Taiwan and Western involvement in this supply chain is crucial to deterring PRC attempts at using rare-earth blackmail. Finally, the PRC has used Ukraine as a transit point to funnel goods into the EU, especially following the collapse of the EU-China investment deal in 2021. A Taiwan campaign to assist Ukraine with post-war reconstruction, or even *during* war reconstruction (particularly in places like Kyiv, now outside of the immediate war zone) would have both public relations and economic effects out of proportion with the size of the investment—especially contrasting with the pre-war PRC infrastructure investment in Ukraine. Separating Ukraine from *both* Russia and PRC economic influence would have significant, positive implications for the post-war world.

Finally, such a level of Taiwanese investment in Europe at the national level will help positively influence and shape the longer-term, multilateral economic discussions with the European Union as well as the United States. Taking advantage of PRC weakness today will greatly benefit Taiwan's ability to integrate into a post-war economic order, in which economic blocs will play a bigger role than the previous globalized trade economic model. This is particularly true as the PRC will seek to accelerate the development of its own economic bloc and the use of the yuan to ensure that the PRC will not be vulnerable to the now proven ability for the United States and the West to use trade as a method of strategic strangulation.

Conclusion

Putin's invasion of Ukraine has forced the European Union and its component nations to drastically re-evaluate the costs and benefits of trade with Russia. With Xi Jinping tying himself to Putin, and the public nature of Xi's assistance in echoing Russian propaganda, this re-evaluation is now being extended to autocracies in general, and the PRC in specific. PRC economic blandishments are now weak due to the extended disruptions of PRC supply chains. A diplomatic and economic offensive by Taiwan could assist in the re-orientation of Europe away from PRC economic capture, which in turn would bolster Taiwan's economic and security positions.

The main point: The CCP's harsh ideological campaigns prior to the fall 2022 Party Congress have alienated the European Union and seriously disrupted global supply chains. This provides Taiwan with an opening to cooperate more extensively with the Europeans, widen Taiwan's diplomatic space, and reduce both European and Taiwanese dependency on the PRC market.

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The Implications of Delivery Delays in Purchased Arms for Taiwan's Defense Planning

By: John Dotson

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Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February, the Ukrainian defense effort has made extensive use of hand-held anti-aircraft missiles (man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADS) and anti-tank missiles (ATMs) to offset the Russian numerical superiority in armored vehicles and aircraft. Sales and training for these systems began long before the war: for example, the United States approved sales to Ukraine in March 2018 and October 2019 for a total of 360 FGM-148 Javelin ATMs and associated Javelin Command Launch Units (CLUs). The pace of ATM delivery has ratcheted up dramatically since the onset of hostilities: based on US government figures from early April, the United States at that point had provided Ukraine's armed forces with 5,000 Javelin and 7,000 other anti-armor weapons systems, not including the significant commitments also made by other NATO member nations. [1]

Although it is difficult to gauge from public information the actual expenditure rate of these weapons systems, the pace of delivery in replacement systems—alongside credible reports of heavy Russian casualties—suggests that the rate of expenditure has been very high indeed. (In late March, Ukrainian officials reportedly indicated to their US counterparts that they needed a stunning figure of 500 Javelins and Stinger MANPADS each per day.) This is turn impacts Taiwan's defense planning, as Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND, 中華民國國防部) has also made purchases in recent years of many of the same systems now being rapidly shipped to the war zone in Ukraine. With many of these systems on long, multi-year timetables for delivery—and with production capacity limited by parts shortages and other constraints—the war in Ukraine is likely having a significant impact on Taiwan's own defense planning.

Taiwan's Purchases of US-Manufactured Weapons—and Competing Priorities for Delivery

The issue of Javelin ATM purchases provides a telling example of how the Ukraine war has affected Taiwan's own force planning, in terms of the delivery of foreign-manufactured weapons systems. Taiwan has also purchased Javelins, beginning with a December 2015 sale of 208 missiles for USD $57 million. Unconfirmed Taiwan press reporting in April 2021 indicated that a total of 400 Javelin missiles and 42 associated launch units would be delivered in a single large shipment to Taiwan sometime in 2022, "effectively strengthening Taiwan's anti-armor combat capability." Yet, the pressing demands of the war in Ukraine—not to mention competition for delivery with other countries such as Thailand, Georgia, and Lithuania, all of whom purchased Javelins in 2021—place such projections in doubt.

ATMs are not the only missiles suddenly in higher demand as a result of the war. US-produced Stinger MANPADS have played a prominent role in knocking down Russian aircraft over Ukraine, particularly helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft flying low in close air support operations. An announced sale of 250 Block I-92F Stinger missiles (and associated support equipment, for an estimated total cost of USD $223.56 million), was part of a series of major arms sales from the United States to Taiwan approved in summer 2019. The United States has currently committed to provide Ukraine with 1,400 Stingers. Although Taiwan's own purchased Stingers are not due for delivery until 2026, Taiwan's MND has reportedly expressed concerns that such competing demands might delay the promised delivery timetable.

Image: Troops of Taiwan's 66th Marine Corps Brigade test fire a Javelin missile during a joint exercise held in Pingtung County, southwestern Taiwan (undated, late March–early April 2022). (Image source: ROC Military News Agency)

Further controversy has also emerged regarding the delivery of new artillery systems to Ukraine, and how this in turn might affect Taiwan. Artillery has proven to be a key factor in the Ukraine war, and NATO countries sympathetic to Ukraine have delivered (or pledged to deliver) a myriad of artillery systems from their own inventories. For its part, the United States has pledged to provide Ukraine with 90 M777 155mm howitzers. There has also been unconfirmed media speculation that the United States might decide to further provide Ukraine with units of the M109 Paladin, a self-propelled howitzer that offers superior mobility over vehicle-towed artillery pieces. Taiwan is itself a customer for the Paladin: in the Biden Administration's first major approved arms sale to Taiwan, in August 2021 the Pentagon announced a sale of 40 M109A6 Paladins (with an accompanying package of support vehicles and additional equipment) at an estimated cost of USD $750 million.

On May 2, Taiwan's MND indicated that Washington was projecting a delay in the Paladin delivery until at least 2026, unless the MND were to consider an alternate system instead. (The original timetable called for the ROC Army to take delivery of 8 Paladins in 2023, followed by 16 each in 2024 and 2025.) One such possibility might be the substitution of additional units of the High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), which was itself the subject of another approved sale in October 2020 (for 11 HIMARS M142 launchers, 64 Army Tactical Missile Systems [ATACMS] M57 missiles, and supporting equipment). It is unclear whether the projected production delay is due to the war in Ukraine, but that would be a logical inference. Although no official decision has been made public, Taiwan's MND indicated in early May that it might consider such a substitution deal.

Finally, there is a possibility that production problems and competing requirements could present delays for what is by far the largest of Taiwan's arms purchases made in recent years: a 2019 purchase of 66 F-16C/D Block 70 fighter aircraft (and associated equipment) from the United States at a cost of USD $8 billion. Delivery of the jets—a generational centerpiece of efforts to upgrade the capacity of the ROC Air Force—is currently scheduled for phased shipments between 2023 and 2026, but could possibly face delays due to competing priorities to deliver fighter aircraft to Europe. In March, there was widespread (and often contradictory) speculation that Eastern European NATO members—with Poland mentioned by name—might transfer to Ukraine their Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter aircraft, with their own inventories to be backfilled by newly produced F-16s originally intended for Taiwan. (This rumored turn of events would have been ironic, as there was also unconfirmed reporting in January 2022 that US officials were exploring possibilities for expediting F-16 deliveries to Taiwan in the face of China's provocative flight activity near the island.) These rumors led to a denial by US defense officials that there was any plan to divert Taiwan F-16 production to another country. To date, no such potential transfer of aircraft—or shift in production timelines—has been made public, but it remains another source of potential uncertainty for Taiwan defense planners.

Production Delays and Supply Challenges

Even prior to the Ukraine War, some of these weapons systems were facing production challenges. Lockheed-Martin, the manufacturer of the F-16 fighter, shifted production from a facility in Fort Worth, Texas to a new plant in Greenville, South Carolina in 2017, reportedly with some attendant disruptions to established production processes. Despite this, the company had projected completion of the first new F-16 from the Greenville facility by the end of 2021. However, due to a reported COVID-related supply chain disruption of an unidentified "major subassembly of the aircraft built by a foreign supplier," in late 2021 the company shifted that projection to the fourth quarter of 2022, a year later than originally planned.

It is also likely that the current worldwide shortage of semiconductors, which is impacting industries from video gaming to automobile manufacturing, is also impacting production of many of these advanced weapons systems. President Biden indicated as much during the course of his May 2 visit to a Lockheed-Martin missile manufacturing plant in Troy, Alabama, noting that each Javelin missile contained more than 200 chips (and citing this as another example as to why America needed to boost its domestic semiconductor manufacturing capacity).

Finally, amidst supply chain disruptions and the crisis of the Ukraine War, Taiwan's timetables for receipt of purchased weapons also face competition from the US military itself. In regards to certain weapons systems—particularly Stingers and Javelins—US military stocks are being depleted in the effort to supply Ukraine, and senior US defense officials are facing pressure from members of Congress (and receiving additional supplemental funding) to replenish US military inventories. In testimony before the Senate Defense Appropriations Committee on May 3, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin pledged to maintain the US military's own minimal stockpiles, stating that "you can rest assured that I will not allow us to go below [minimum required levels] in critical munitions."

Amid such challenges, US defense contractors are seeking to respond to increased production demands. For example, on May 8 Lockheed-Martin CEO James Taiclet stated that his company had set a goal to nearly double Javelin production, from 2,100 to 4,000 units per year. Such an ambitious effort, if successful, could certainly alleviate shortages of—and competition for—the missile. Yet, if the war in Ukraine proves to be a protracted conflict, even such a dramatically increased rate of production might not be sufficient.

Conclusions

The likely delay in delivery of these weapons systems could affect Taiwan's defense planning in a number of areas. The delay in Paladin howitzer delivery, for example, could prompt the MND in the near-term to redeploy existing (and less capable) land-based artillery assets in order to better cover coastal areas and selected islands—and perhaps to consider the need for attendant changes in naval patrols, as well. Lower inventories of man-portable ATMs and MANPADS will raise the prospect of the need to more carefully husband these resources, and to potentially place greater weight on other (and potentially less effective) tactical options to cope with enemy armor and low-flying aircraft. If the F-16C/D Block 70 fighter aircraft deliveries were to be delayed, this could arguably have the greatest impact of all: by substantially limiting the ROC Air Force's aviation assets with which to respond to continuing provocative Chinese flight activity (such as a major incursion on May 6), and to thereby rely even more heavily on ground-based air defense assets.

Another noteworthy potential effect could be that Taiwan's defense planners might see foreign weapons purchases as unreliable—already an existing concern, following long years during which US approvals of arms sales were frequently denied or delayed due to concerns regarding Washington's relations with Beijing. Taiwan's current defense procurement strategy is placing increasing emphasis on indigenous production—particularly in terms of anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems—a trend that could receive even greater impetus if expected arms deliveries are significantly postponed in a way that negatively impacts the MND's force structure planning. The projected delays in weapons deliveries to Taiwan provide yet another example of how Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine is having strategic ripple effects far beyond Europe.

The main point: Taiwan has made a series of major arms purchases from the United States since 2019, including F-16 fighter jets, advanced field artillery systems, and hand-held anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles. Delivery of some of these systems is likely to be significantly postponed, due to both production delays and the competing priority to supply weapons to Ukraine. This in turn could impact the force modernization efforts and defense planning of Taiwan's armed forces.

[1] To cite but one example, at the end of March the UK government indicated that it had committed to provide Ukraine with "over 4,000 NLAW [anti-tank missiles] and Javelin anti-tank systems, as well as committing to send Starstreak air defence systems and 6,000 new anti-tank and high explosive missiles." See: UK Ministry of Defense, "UK Convenes International Conference to Secure Military Aid for Ukraine," press release (March 31, 2022). https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-convenes-international-conference-to-secure-military-aid-for-ukraine.

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Defending Taiwan is About More Than Weapons

By: Lt. Gen. (USMC, ret.) Wallace "Chip" Gregson

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"Will the United States defend Taiwan?" is a favorite question posed by inquiring reporters and commentators. It is a very good way to force government officials to answer a complex question with a one-line answer. It goes to one of our vulnerabilities: there is no easy or quick answer that will satisfy our own people and our allies. President Biden confronted this question last October, and answered—correctly in my view—that the U.S. would come to Taiwan's defense if it was invaded by mainland China.

Immediately following the President's answer, we endured the time-honored and demeaning bureaucratic spectacle of staff hastening to explain "what the President meant to say." The "Policy Blob" (in Ben Rhodes' term) busied itself with discussions of strategic ambiguity, "one-China," and other related terms—no doubt to the delight of the Chinese Communist Party (中國共產黨, CCP), and the discomfort of those looking for US leadership. It's said that a gaffe is a political leader speaking the truth. So it was here.

It is past time to redefine our policy. In a superb *Bulwark* article, Ambassador and former Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Eric S. Edelman and former Special Assistant to the President Franklin C Miller present a powerful argument that our policy of "strategic ambiguity" is "played out." Indeed it is, and likely has been for some time.

Our allies recognize that our current policy has had its day. Taiwan, a thriving, raucous democracy, poses no military or economic threat to China. It has never been part of the PRC, but the PRC does pose a mortal threat to Taiwan and boasts about it. Former Prime Minister of Japan Abe Shinzo recently called for the United States to end our policy of ambiguity. He made clear that we must not allow the status quo to be changed by coercion or force.

Change may already be happening. A May 10 *Reuters* story ("China Rebukes U.S. for Changing Taiwan Wording on State Department Website") noted that the "State Department's website's section on relations with Taiwan has removed wording both on not supporting Taiwan independence and on acknowledging Beijing's position that Taiwan is part of China." This got China's attention, with Beijing condemning the "political manipulation" of the United States.

The second challenge—how we would help defend Taiwan *in extremis*—must be worked out if we are to deter further use of coercion and force. In the not-so-distant past, our unchallenged sea and air control allowed us to demonstrate our support with naval and air forces quickly deployed as needed to areas near Taiwan. Responding was a conceptually simple matter: we had the ability to linger offshore and project power when and where we wished. Today, China's ongoing and massive military expansion—as well as modern technology's gifts of comprehensive surveillance, and guided weapons accuracy at distance—profoundly challenge our control of sea and air.

About 10 years ago, China declared "indisputable sovereignty" over the South China Sea, and mounted a massive dredging operation (at considerable risk to that sea's ecosystem) to build deep water ports and runways on seven features in the Spratly Islands. These examples of military infrastructure—despite China's pledge not to militarize the region—are not minor features or insignificant garrisons on small patches of territory. One is bigger than the area inside the Washington Beltway, another larger than Pearl Harbor. Many observers hold the view that China has gained *de facto* control over the South China Sea.

This dredging and construction of over 3,200 acres was challenged by The Philippines in a case brought before the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague. The Philippines stood alone, save for support from Vietnam. The world's major powers, including the United States, remained silent. The court's decision supported the challenge, but China ignored it. Now thoroughly militarized, these features can support and sustain operations of the PLA Navy and Air Force, air defense forces, their maritime militia, and armed fishermen. Other claimants to areas of the South China Sea are effectively excluded, through coercion, from exercising legitimate maritime activities.

With our sea and air control thus challenged, we can no longer rely on merely deploying forces into and near Taiwan without interference at the onset of crisis. We must restore deterrence under these new conditions, as often recommended by US INDOPACOM commanders past and present. That includes, but is certainly not limited to, enhancing Taiwan's defense.

Many recommendations have been made about what defense goods Taiwan needs. Taiwan has its own views. Differences among the various recommendations invariably reflect differing perspectives on threats, from political warfare through gray zone coercion to the highest extremes of conflict. Largely absent are discussions of just how the United States, and perhaps Japan, can coordinate, or even integrate, combat operations with Taiwan.

What is obvious, and without objection, is that Russia's unprovoked assault on Ukraine to end Ukraine's sovereignty and absorb it into greater Russia—and China's refusal to condemn this interference in another nation's affairs—serves notice to Taiwan that they may be next. We cannot continue to just take note of this problem. As stated in the *Bulwark* article: "the United States should begin *immediately* to send advanced anti-air, anti-missile, anti-armor, and anti-ship equipment to Taiwan, accompanied by American trainers and advisers" *(emphasis in the original)*.

The last elements mentioned, American trainers and advisors, may be the most important. Taiwan's armed forces have been isolated from those of other nations since 1979. Ending this isolation, and enhancing Taiwan's awareness of military and naval operational concepts development over the last four decades, is essential to enabling the innovative and effective use of various weapons. In addition, these trainers and advisors must be able to create a capability to integrate Taiwan's maneuver and fires with that of US (and perhaps Japanese and Australian) forces. This would help prevent "friendly fire" incidents and add to the effectiveness of foreign forces coming to the aid of Taiwan. Trainers and advisors cannot create an elegant, sophisticated system quickly, but they can put together a serviceable system that, with much operator involvement, can ensure effective coordination and integration across national lines.

This is a two-part challenge: the first is a policy determination, and we must get the policy right so we can get the defense right. We're on the clock.

The main point: In the face of a growing threat from China, the United States and its Pacific allies must not only take immediate further steps to ensure the delivery of advanced weapons systems to Taiwan, but even more importantly must strengthen coordination mechanisms for integrating military operations.

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Lawfare, Outer Space, Cyber Warfare, and ROC Vulnerabilities

By: Guermantes Lailari and Michael J. Listner

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Taiwan (also known as the Republic of China, or ROC) occupies a prominent position on the geopolitical stage given its contested status as a sovereign nation. In turn, this unsettled status could portend military action by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Much attention has been focused on strategic threats in the context of kinetic action by the PRC in the Taiwan Strait. Yet, when considering these potential actions, strategists tend to focus on hard military power when evaluating potential threats, and to discount asymmetric approaches. This article will examine potential asymmetric means the PRC might use to achieve its goals, and illustrate such means with the ideas contained in *Unrestricted Warfare* (超限戰)—a 1999 analysis written by two People's Liberation Army (PLA) colonels, which advocated a strategy of waging war stealthily against an adversary.

This strategy was refined in 2003 with the official declaration by the Chinese Communist Party (中國共產黨, CCP) of their "Three Warfares" (三種戰法) doctrine, a form of hybrid warfare that entails legal, psychological, and media means. This article will: (1) emphasize the legal aspect of the Three Warfares in the outer space domain; (2) identify vulnerabilities for the ROC; and (3) present possible scenarios using "lawfare" in the outer space and cyber domains. The PLA capabilities discussed in this article fall under the PLA's Strategic Support Force (SSF, 中國人民解放軍戰略支援部隊)—which is responsible for Three Warfares operations, as well as cyber, space, electronic, information, and communications missions and capabilities.

Outer Space, Cyber Space and Lawfare

Lawfare can be defined as employing the rule of law and its instruments and institutions as force to augment or replace physical force to serve a national interest or achieve a political/geopolitical end. Lawfare is consistent with irregular warfare as espoused by the PLA and the Three Warfares doctrine. The PRC utilizes lawfare in conjunction with other types of warfare, including the two other legs of the Three Warfares. So, how is lawfare relevant for the ROC in terms of outer space and the cyber domain?

The ROC signed the Outer Space Treaty when it was first open for signature in 1967, and ratified it three years later. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly voted on October 25, 1971 to recognize the PRC as the sole legitimate representative for China to the UN, and to remove the ROC's representative. This act abrogated the ROC's legal status under the Outer Space Treaty, including Article VIII, which grants signatories jurisdiction over satellites that they have launched under their authority. In the absence of such legal backing, the ROC has been forced to develop its space infrastructure through alternative channels. The ROC's *de* *facto* autonomy continues to be disputed by the PRC and only has the support of 13 states who are members of the UN.

Taiwan does not currently have a domestic space launch capability, and instead relies on other states such as the United States to launch its satellites. Since 1999, Taipei has launched 17 satellites; however, because of the previously mentioned UN resolution, they are registered officially by the UN as belonging to the PRC, which designates Taiwan as a "province of the PRC." The ROC is not a member of the Registration Convention to the Outer Space Treaty (one that expanded registration rights), as the ROC lost its status in the UN before that agreement was open for signature. Moreover, the ROC has not sought official registration with the UN. This situation creates an opportunity for the PRC to use lawfare against the ROC as a precursor to employing hard power.

Lawfare, the PRC, and the ROC

The ROC's legal status—and particularly the legal status of its satellites—opens avenues for the PRC to employ lawfare. For example, the PRC's legal claim to the ROC's satellites could give the PRC leverage to deny the ROC the use of outer space assets. In this respect, the PLA could target the ROC's satellites with soft-kill and hard-kill counter-space capabilities without violating any international agreement. The underlying validation for any such actions would be the ROC's lack of formal sovereignty: the PRC could point to the UN Office of Outer Space Affairs listing these space assets as registered to a "province of the PRC," which would give the PRC legal standing to disable the ROC's space assets—either to intimidate the ROC, or as a precursor to invasion.

The PRC could also employ lawfare to exploit the ROC's dependence on government and non-governmental satellites registered to the United States and other states. Given the extent to which the ROC's national security depends on these space assets for communications, navigation, and intelligence, the PRC could use lawfare to legally justify targeting these space assets using offensive space control (OSC) measures to deceive, disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy these satellites prior to an invasion. In the event a conflict escalates to open hostilities, the PRC could also use kinetic physical, non-kinetic physical, electronic, and cyber attacks against the ROC's satellite infrastructure.

Scenarios

Four escalatory scenarios will be presented here to illustrate and explain the implications of lawfare as applied to outer space:

Scenario 1: Current Situation

In this scenario, the PLA conducts intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), increasing its understanding of the Taiwanese order of battle. The PRC also crosses into the ROC Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) to detect weaknesses and strengths. The PLA would then update invasion plans based on new intelligence, and conduct minor offensive counter space operations to test the ROC's ability to detect and mitigate the PLA's actions. In the cyber arena, the PLA would conduct ISR while seeking opportunities for intrusions and disruptions.

Taiwan could be expected to defend its space assets by using defensive counter space (DCS) operations, defined as "active and passive measures taken to protect friendly space capabilities from attack, interference, or hazards." According to US doctrine (Joint Publication 3-14, Space Operations), these DCS measures "safeguard assets from hazards such as direct or indirect attack, space debris, radio frequency interference, and naturally occurring phenomena such as radiation. DCS measures can apply to defense of any segment of a space system—space, link, or ground."

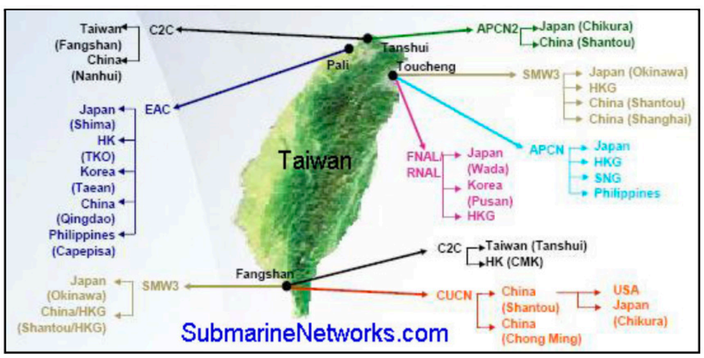
Scenario 2: Increased Tension

In this scenario, the PLA conducts tests and probes to disrupt Taiwan's cyber and satellite operations. Recent power outages throughout Taiwan could potentially have been a PLA cyber attack designed to demonstrate the CCP's displeasure at the recent visits to Taiwan of former Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff General Michael Mullen and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Interestingly, the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense (MND, 中華民國國防部) did not publish the number of PLA aircraft violations during the visits. This action denied the ability of the PLA to communicate their displeasure with these visits, and was an effective MND counter-propaganda operation.

Scenario 3: Pre-Conflict / Pre-Invasion

In this scenario, the PLA has developed a battle plan and will conduct actions to enable both kinetic and non-kinetic attacks. For example, the PLA might attack ROC government web sites, and disrupt the financial and banking sector (financial warfare), to induce anxiety amid the general population. All of these actions would be amplified in legacy and social media.

Before kinetic attacks begin, the PLA could prepare the battlefield by preventing Taiwan's use of satellites through electronic jamming, cyber-attacks, and laser operations. The PLA might also destroy satellites that allow Taiwan to communicate within Taiwan or with the outside world, including satellites registered to other states. At this point, the PLA could also disrupt, deny, degrade, or destroy fiber-optic cables that enable much of Taiwan's electronic communication with the outside world *(see diagram below)*.



Graphic: Cable landing stations in Taiwan. (Graphic Source: Submarine Networks)

After analyzing these four main junctions (15 submarine cables landing in seven cable landing stations in Taiwan), the PLA could determine how to degrade Taiwan's access to the rest of the world, potentially including severing underwater cables that travel to the PRC. According to a recent discussion of communication security by Taiwan's parliament, 95 percent of Taiwan's data passes through underwater communication cables. The PLA might also explore other methods to degrade or destroy these links. Assessing Russian mistakes in the current Russia-Ukraine war and Kiev's successful information operations, the PLA and the CCP would not allow images and commentary sympathetic to the Taiwanese to be shown to the rest of the world, such as suffering elderly people, women, and children. Instead, the PLA and CCP would work to manipulate messages to reinforce the CCP's narrative. Additionally, the PLA would disrupt internal communication within Taiwan, as well as the ROC's other islands.

The purpose of these PLA planning and preliminary actions would be to paralyze the ROC's internal and external communications, prevent military and commercial activity that would adversely affect PLA operations against Taiwan, and enhance the communications breakdown's adverse effects on the ROC's armed forces and government. In sum, the PLA would seek to completely disconnect the ROC from the rest of the world.

Scenario 4: Hostilities, Invasion, and Occupation

In this final scenario, the sole goal of the PLA's tactical attack would be to occupy and annex Taiwan. The PLA will likely degrade rather than destroy infrastructure in order to limit post-conflict rebuilding expenses.

The PLA would likely continue operations similar to those in Scenario 3, which would help prepare the battlefield for invasion. Yet, their efforts would focus primarily on ensuring that communications networks remain degraded to the level needed until the ROC government surrenders. If one of the means to reach their objectives is to destroy communication nodes, the PLA has a variety of anti-radiation missiles or precision-guided munitions to use against radar, microwave installations, satellite dishes and ground stations, and other communication sites and nodes.

Employing lawfare and pointing to the official registration of the satellites, the PLA could take control of ROC satellites instead of destroying them. With the ROC's satellites intact and under their control, the PLA could disable key nodes temporarily or replace them with products from PLA-linked companies such as Huawei and ZTE. Huawei, ZTE, and others will be tasked with rebuilding the communications infrastructure and building new communications in accordance with social controls that exist in the PRC.

Moreover, the PLA probably does not want to destroy the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC, 台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) facilities that produce the most advanced micro-processing chips in the world. The PLA might instead seek to capture these facilities and key personnel as one of its first acts. Since there is no separation between the PLA and the commercial sector, the CCP would likely plan to assign specific individuals to be on-site at TSMC complexes.

These actions would all be part of an invasion plan and targeting process that the PLA has developed and will update from observations of the Russian military, including its recent invasion of Ukraine and experiences in Syria.

Conclusion

Hybrid warfare is a valuable tool in the PLA's arsenal, and lawfare tactics will prove invaluable for the CCP's efforts to subjugate the ROC under the PRC. The ROC will have to incorporate resilience into its space and cyber capabilities in light of the PLA capabilities arrayed against it. Taiwan must also proactively identify and address the lawfare and other hybrid warfare methods the CCP and the PLA will employ. In this regard, the events in Ukraine could be a harbinger for the CCP's moves against Taiwan, and the PLA will assess accomplishments and challenges observed in the Russian Federation's invasion of that sovereign country. Similarly, Taiwanese leaders should examine the asymmetric means used by the CCP and the PLA, and prepare countermeasures accordingly.

The main point: In the event of elevated tensions or war, the PLA will be expected to attack Taiwan space and cyber capabilities. Taipei must take proactive steps to design resilience into their communications (space, cyber, etc.) networks, and identify and address the lawfare and other hybrid warfare methods that the CCP and the PLA will likely employ.

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New EU Parliament Report Reflects Changing EU Messaging on Taiwan

By: Marshall Reid

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On April 4, 2022, the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted a new report on the European Union's approach to security challenges in the Indo-Pacific. While it must be noted that the report has not yet been approved by a full European Parliament vote, it remains notable for its more direct, forthright language focused on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC). [1] Describing the island democracy as "a key partner and democratic ally," the report details a range of potential avenues for expanding EU-Taiwan cooperation, while also criticizing the PRC for its "increasingly assertive and expansionist behaviour." For an institution that was once reluctant to even mention Taiwan by name, this language represents a remarkable shift in messaging. Given recent developments in the EU-China relationship—as well as mounting global fears of the threats posed by authoritarianism—this new report could potentially signal broader EU support for Taiwan. [2]

The Report

In recent years, the Indo-Pacific has taken on growing significance for the EU. Describing the region as "the world's economic and strategic centre of gravity," the union has increasingly worked to strengthen its ties with a wide range of Indo-Pacific states. Thus far, these efforts have substantially expanded the relationship between the two regions, particularly on the economic front. Indeed, as a 2021 EU factsheet noted, "the EU is already the top investor, the leading development cooperation partner, and one of the biggest trading partners in the Indo-Pacific region." Seeking to build on these ties and affirm their commitment to the region, the EU and its constituent bodies have released several strategic documents on the subject in recent years. Perhaps the most substantial of these reports is the "EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific," a comprehensive overview of the EU's ties with the region released in April 2021. While the recent report has much in common with this 2021 predecessor, it takes a more direct and assertive approach, particularly in its description of China and Taiwan.

At its core, the Committee report is very much a product of its time. Released against the backdrop of Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, it devotes a substantial portion of its length to the crisis, condemning Moscow's needless aggression and encouraging global solidarity in resisting it. This language is certainly understandable, given the heavy economic, military, and humanitarian burdens that Putin's war has placed on the EU. Yet, the report does not limit its focus to Russia. Instead, it seeks to place the invasion within the context of a broader EU Indo-Pacific strategy, drawing parallels between the threats faced by the two regions.

While the EU's approach to China has become increasingly assertive in recent years, the new report contains even stronger language. Unlike past publications, which described the PRC as a "rival" or "challenge," the April document explicitly links Chinese behavior with the deterioration of global security. Specifically, it argues that China—through its declaration of a "no limits" partnership with Russia and subsequent refusal to condemn Russia's invasion—has effectively enabled Moscow's aggression. Furthermore, the report accuses Beijing of contributing to "geopolitical tensions and competition, reflected by an increase in military spending, military build-up, and a more aggressive rhetoric, thereby threatening the rules-based international order." In addition to these allegations, the document criticizes the PRC for a host of other transgressions, including (but not limited to):

Conducting aggressive, expansionist policies toward Hong Kong, Taiwan, and India;

- Maintaining an illegal presence in the South China Sea, despite rulings by the Permanent Court of Arbitration prohibiting it;
- Engaging in widespread disinformation campaigns and disrupting democratic processes;
- Pursuing "aggressive commercial practices based on diplomatic coercion and belligerent debt diplomacy policies;"
- Refusing to engage in multilateral discussions on a variety of critical issues, including nuclear non-proliferation.

While many of these concerns had been addressed in past EU reports *(see here and here)*, rarely have they been presented in such a bold, confrontational manner, particularly in a single document. Taken together, they help to illustrate the EU's mounting unease regarding China's foreign and domestic policies, a trend that has only accelerated in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While this deterioration of EU-China relations should certainly concern leaders in Beijing, it could present opportunities for Taiwan to make inroads in Europe. As the report makes clear, there is a growing appetite for cooperation with Taiwan among EU states.

Though past EU documents have spoken positively of Taiwan, the April report takes a significant step forward in promoting EU-Taiwan collaboration. Rather than merely criticizing the PRC for its aggressive tactics in the Taiwan Strait, it explicitly calls for substantive engagement with Taiwan. Specifically, it encourages EU states to:

> *"[…] enhance the existing partnership with Taiwan so as to promote common values such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and good governance in the Indo-Pacific region, work together on topics such as secure sea lines of communication and open and safe airspace, and engage in joint efforts to tackle climate change."*

Additionally, the report suggests that EU agencies should cooperate more fully with their Taiwanese counterparts, while also encouraging closer ties between European and Taiwanese think tanks and NGOs. Notably, the report also reiterates the EU's support for Taiwan's participation in international multilateral institutions, including the WHO (this statement was previously made in a 2021 report on EU-Taiwan ties). Finally, it commends Taiwan for its willingness to participate in international sanctions against Russia, suggesting that cooperation between the EU, the United States, and Taiwan could prove increasingly productive in the future.

Much like the report's accusations against China, many of these suggestions have been made in past EU documents. However, they take on increased salience when considered in the context of the report as a whole. In a document rife with fundamental questions about the EU's relations with China, Taiwan is presented as a valuable future partner. In a broader context, the report is indicative of larger shifts in EU messaging toward China and Taiwan.

Context and Implications

Taken on its own, the Parliament report might not appear to be especially noteworthy, especially given the sheer volume of reports released by the EU on a weekly basis. Yet, when considered in the context of recent developments in the EU-China relationship, it takes on added significance. As mentioned previously, the relationship between the EU and the PRC has evolved substantially over the past decade. A mere six years ago, the EU viewed China in a largely positive light. In its report "Elements for a New EU Strategy on China," released in June 2016, the EU Parliament portrayed the PRC as a valuable trade partner, a source of critical foreign direct investment, and a potential collaborator on a variety of global issues. [3] While it mentioned China's assertive foreign policy and concerning approach to human rights, it nevertheless envisioned an EU-China relationship that could provide "reciprocal benefit in both political and economic terms." As events of the following years would demonstrate, this period of bonhomie was not to last.

In March 2019, following several years of growing Chinese assertiveness, the EU Commission released an updated strategic paper detailing its approach to China. Dubbed "EU-China – A Strategic Outlook," this new document offered a more realistic, pragmatic assessment of the PRC and its role in the international system. [4] Famously, it described China as an "economic competitor" and "systemic rival," with which deft statesmanship in negotiation would be required. This apprehension regarding Chinese foreign and domestic policy only grew in subsequent years, as Beijing's aggressive diplomacy during the COVID-19 pandemic effectively alienated many European partners and turned public opinion against China. As a result, states across Europe have grown increasingly comfortable standing up to China, while official documents (such as the aforementioned EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific) have become progressively more critical of Chinese policy.

For Taiwan, this shift in messaging could have significant implications. Already, several EU states—including Lithuania, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia, among others—have expressed interest in expanding their ties with Taiwan. And while the EU once discussed Taiwan as little more than a footnote in its negotiations with China (literally, in the case of the 2019 China strategy), it now discusses the island democracy in its own right. As the April report makes clear, EU leaders increasingly view the PRC as a threat to international stability, even explicitly linking Beijing to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. If this deterioration of EU-China relations continues—as recent events suggest it will—Taiwan could certainly stand to benefit. As the new report makes clear, the EU and Taiwan have much in common. All that remains is for EU leaders to turn messaging into action.

The main point: A recent EU Parliament report was notable for its direct approach in both identifying the challenges that China poses to the international security order, as well as offering clear statements of support for closer collaboration with Taiwan. In the context of broader trends in EU-China relations, it could represent a significant shift in messaging.

[1] The report was adopted by the Committee on Foreign Affairs by a vote of 56-8, with 12 abstentions. It is currently scheduled for a full EU Parliament debate on June 6, though it could be debated as soon as May 18.

[2] By definition, the report is an "own-initiative report," meaning that it is a policy recommendation directly proposed by a parliamentary committee for debate by the entirety of Parliament. If the Parliament approves the report, it would then be sent to the European Commission, which would subsequently be compelled to inform Parliament whether or not it will be preparing legislation on the issue. While such reports do not carry legal weight on their own, they are nevertheless seen as reflecting the general feeling of Parliament. Accordingly, they are widely viewed as "significant precursor[s] to legislative procedures being initiated."

[3] The 2016 EU-China Strategy was submitted by the European Commission to Parliament, which passed it 570-61, with 40 abstentions. While subsequent papers have provided updated language on China, the 2016 report remains the authoritative document on EU-China relations.

[4] This paper was released jointly by the European Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) and was intended to reflect growing EU concern regarding Chinese behavior. As the paper notes, the 2016 EU-China strategy continues to be the primary guiding document for the EU's approach to China.