

PRC COERCIVE INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF TAIWAN'S RESILIENCE

“Lies, Lawfare, and Leverage:

The CCP's Gaslighting and Manipulation to Marginalize Taiwan.”

Testimony before the House Select Committee on the CCP

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Executive Summary. The PRC has vastly expanded the scope, scale, innovation, and integration of its use of coercive tactics against Taiwan, with purposes including the demoralization of the Taiwan people, to degrade the status quo that has kept the peace in the Taiwan Strait for decades. Over the course of the last five years the PRC has significantly increased: 1) The scale of its military exercises around Taiwan and standing presence in and around the Strait; 2) Its doctrinal and technological approach to information warfare; and 3) Its integration of military, information, cyber, and economic coercion to coordinate multi-front pressure on the Taiwan government and people. Yet despite – and likely because of – this intensifying pressure, public opinion on Taiwan has hardened against the PRC, and other international partners are increasingly willing to support Taiwan publicly. As the PRC seeks to tie U.S. support to Taiwan to ongoing trade negotiations, American resolve and leadership from the Select Committee will be vital.

Introduction. Chairman Moolenaar, Ranking Member Khanna, distinguished members of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party (CCP): thank you for including me in this important hearing today, at the beginning of a most consequential year for U.S.-China relations that will have a significant impact on Taiwan's future. Since its inception, this committee has played a critical role in providing bipartisan oversight and in setting a bicameral legislative agenda that has meaningfully strengthened U.S. policy towards the People's Republic of China (PRC) and in support of Taiwan. In particular, the *Ten More for Taiwan* document released by this committee in late 2025 provides an important set of findings and recommendations. At a time when this kind of work is too rare, the Select Committee has consistently demonstrated that vital American interests can be pursued with rigor and resolve in the face of growing threats from the PRC. As the United States' seventh largest trading partner, tenth largest export market, and a critical node in its most sensitive technology supply chains, Taiwan is not only a vital diplomatic and security partner, but indispensable to the United States' and the world's prosperity. As this Committee has found, a Chinese attack on Taiwan could cost the world \$10 trillion in a single year.¹ This Committee's work has never been more important.

Over the last several years, the PRC has expanded the scope and scale of its use of coercion against Taiwan in the military, information, cyber, and economic domains. The PRC is also using more integrated and innovative tactics in its longstanding quest to undermine Taiwan's resolve, in order to advance its goal of unification. Paradoxically, however, China's use of coercion against Taiwan has not produced the intended result:

polls indicate that the people on Taiwan are more confident in their Taiwan identity and are consistently opposed to unification. Moreover, the international community, from American allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, to European allies, to the G7, are more attuned to and willing to shape cross-Strait dynamics. But in the last year, the PRC has attempted to connect Taiwan issues to ongoing trade negotiations with the United States. With the leadership of the Select Committee, Congress can continue to help to protect Taiwan’s status and security, but it must act swiftly and with resolve.

There has been significant escalation in the scope, scale, and temporal nature of PRC military coercion of Taiwan. Over the last several years and particularly since 2022, the PRC has dramatically increased the numbers of peacetime military vessels and aircraft it uses to apply pressure to Taiwan. In 2016, Taiwan saw 30 sorties incur into its airspace; in 2023, it saw over 1,700 of the same incursions. A decade ago, PLA coercion was used in isolated spurts to respond to specific perceived provocations. When the PLA held a military exercise, it had a clear beginning and end, and operational patterns returned to a recognizable baseline thereafter. Today, enabled by vast expansions to its Air Force and Navy, the PLA maintains a significant air and maritime presence in and around the Taiwan Strait, and while the scale of its exercises has grown, it also maintains a heavy presence once exercises conclude. PLA exercises in August of 2022, May of 2024, and December of 2025 not only constituted the largest air and maritime presence around Taiwan ever, but attempted to normalize that presence as a new peacetime baseline.² The absolute number of PLA violations of Taiwan’s ADIZ have increased steadily, and the PLA now has a near-daily practice of sending vessels and aircraft across the so-called Median Line that had been treated as *a de facto* boundary and is intended to preserve stability in the Strait, sending the message that it will continue to do so with impunity.³

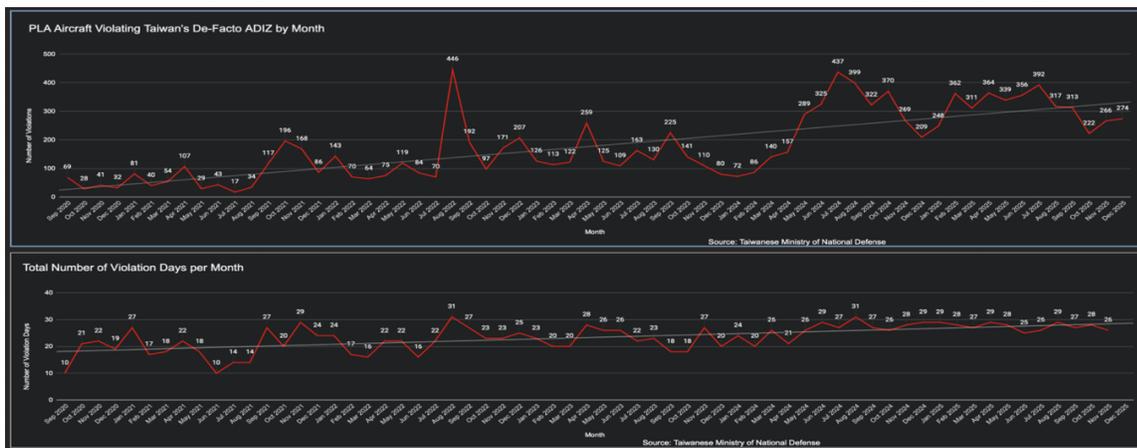


Figure 1: PLA Violations of Taiwan’s De-Facto ADIZ⁴

These exercises have multiple purposes: they help the PLA to improve its readiness by simulating strangulation or invasion of Taiwan; these in turn are intended to demoralize the people of Taiwan, attempt to sap their will to fight and persuade them that eventual PRC

dominance is inevitable. They also seek to numb the international community to what would have been previously considered an extremely elevated PLA presence that increasingly encroaches on Taiwan itself.⁵

The PRC Has Accelerated and Innovated its Use of Information Warfare.

PRC coercive innovation is also taking place in the information space. In recent years the PLA has embraced a reliance on “cognitive domain operations,” intended to manipulate an adversary’s cognitive and perceptual space.⁶ While the PLA has long practiced information warfare, one study notes that Taiwan is subject to more disinformation than any other place on earth. This holistic concept of information warfare includes everything from disinformation operations to the use of non-kinetic weapons intended to affect servicemembers cognition (i.e., blinding lasers).⁷ This concept puts China on the offensive and is intended to undermine adversary military cohesion as well as societal morale. Leading analysts have observed the PLA’s increasing application of cognitive domain operations with multiple objectives, including: to sow doubts about Taiwan’s political leaders, degrade public confidence in Taiwan’s military, contribute to Taiwan citizens’ feeling of international isolation, and to improve public perceptions of the PRC.⁸ The purpose is clear: To convince Taiwan’s leaders and society that their political status quo is untenable and that they must inevitably submit to the PRC. The PRC has used some of the same tactics to distort public perceptions of Taiwan in partner countries including the United States, Australia, and Japan.

These PRC efforts are also bolstered by technological innovation. Taiwan’s National Security Bureau reported a 60% increase in false or biased information distributed by the PRC between 2023 and 2024 and a 250% increase in the number of inauthentic PRC accounts across social media accounts over the same period, including on Tik Tok, Facebook, and X. Cyber attacks have also doubled in the last year.⁹ The NSB has also observed a ballooning in PRC-originated video content in the last three years, including AI-enabled videos and deepfakes that can now be generated at scale. With these technologies, the risk grows that Beijing will attempt widespread interference in Taiwan’s 2026 and 2028 elections.¹⁰

The PRC is Increasingly Integrating its use of Coercion Across Domains. While Beijing has long used a diverse toolkit to attempt its coercion, including information manipulation, lawfare, economic coercion, cyber operations, espionage, and sub-conventional military activity, it is increasingly able to bring these tools to bear simultaneously. For example, after Speaker Pelosi’s 2022 trip, the PLA launched its largest-ever military exercise at the time, suspended imports of over 100 food products, intensified information operations, and instituted a sand export ban.¹¹ Likewise during the 2024 election cycle, the PRC placed trade barriers on 2,455 products, demonstrated a 60% increases in its use of false information, doubled its cyber intrusions, accelerated its poaching of Taiwan’s diplomatic allies, and heightened the tempo and scale of its military exercises. Data suggest that the PRC’s use of economic warfare has itself become more comprehensive — while the PRC has long practiced reactive, specific bans on products from Taiwan, its use of economic

coercion has become more systematic and proactive. A 2023 PRC trade investigation barred over two thousand products and in 2024 the PRC suspended tariff concessions on over 134 items. Similarly, Taiwan’s National Security Bureau has documented the increased incidence of PRC cyber attacks against Taiwan’s critical infrastructure in correlation with sensitive political events.¹²

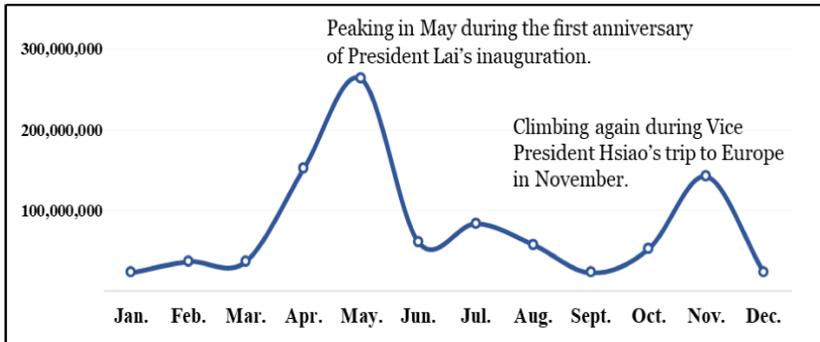


Figure 2: Number of Reported Chinese Cyberattacks against Taiwan’s Critical Infrastructure in 2025

The PRC has increasingly demonstrated its ability to place pressure on the Taiwan government and society simultaneously, signaling to both audiences that it can cause and target pain as punishment for political adverse political developments. As in its use of newer technologies in the information space, we should expect this synchronized pressure to mount into Taiwan’s 2028 election cycle.

China’s Tactics Have Been Counterproductive. In the face of the PRC’s growing and increasingly innovative pressure, however, public opinion on Taiwan and globally has hardened against the PRC. Large majorities increasingly identify solely as Taiwanese, as opposed to Chinese or holding a dual identity.¹³ A recent survey found that nearly 90% of Taiwan people view the PRC unfavorably and a similar share oppose unification.¹⁴ While less than half of respondents supported independence in 2025, over 60% would favor it if the current status quo became untenable. In another poll, over 80% of respondents opposed China’s “one country, two systems” model, rejected the idea that Taiwan is a part of China, and opposed the PRC’s “One China Principle.”¹⁵ Surveys also consistently find that over two-thirds of Taiwan people are willing to defend their country against a PRC invasion.¹⁶ The trend is clear: contrary to its objectives, the PRC’s use of coercion has stiffened resolve on Taiwan, making it less likely that the Taiwan people will agree to any near-term change to its status that Beijing might seek to advance.¹⁷ And although we cannot count on this steady resolve to continue, we can expect that while it does, Beijing may respond by further increasing its use of coercion, making clear and consistent deterrence vitally necessary.

Meanwhile, other like-minded allies and partners have increased their understanding of and engagement in the maintenance of the status quo and raise concerns about PRC actions that undermine it. Over the course of the Biden Administration, the United States worked energetically with partners in the Indo-Pacific and in Europe to attune them to the growing threats from the PRC to Taiwan and to encourage them to make clear their cross-Strait concerns. In the Indo-Pacific, this led to the acceleration of critical force posture initiatives and concerted planning with Japan, the Philippines, and Australia, and more focused diplomatic engagement by the Republic of Korea. In Europe, allies including the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and the European Union began to take a clear public stance in favor of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and Taiwan also became a regular feature of G7 statements.¹⁸

These commitments, in turn, have made it more likely that in the event of an impending crisis or conflict, American allies would be willing to take credible actions that could affect the PRC's decision calculus. Put simply, this was a concerted effort to expand the geographic, diplomatic, and economic scope of deterrent threats the PRC must consider well beyond Taipei and Washington. This allied support comes with some risk and cost to those partners, however, and relies heavily on an international perception of steady American commitment. If the U.S. commitment is perceived to waiver, this may embolden pro-PRC voices on Taiwan and disrupt these positive trends. The recent shift in Lithuania's position is one such example, and numerous American treaty allies have recently visited Beijing. It is perhaps unsurprising then that Beijing has chosen to shift its tactics once again to probe Washington's resolve.

The PRC is Using Trade Negotiations to Try to Shape Taiwan Policy. Beginning in June of 2025, reports began to emerge that PRC negotiators had begun to use the high-level trade negotiation channel to attempt to shape American policy towards Taiwan, much as they tied trade talks to American export controls. The PRC's objectives appear to be two-fold. First, two recent leader-level phone calls suggest that Beijing is seeking to delay and otherwise interfere with Taiwan arms sales, which are consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act. After the presidents' November 2025 and February 2026 phone calls, official Chinese readouts suggest that Taiwan was central to President Xi's call agenda and that he delivered warnings about the importance "of the return of Taiwan to China" and against additional near-term arms sales.¹⁹ It is commendable that the administration proceeded with the historic December 2025 package; given Taiwan's long list of needs, the Congress has an interest in ensuring the PRC does not disrupt future sales.

Second, current and former diplomats report that senior Chinese officials are forthright that Beijing hopes to gain specific Taiwan declaratory policy concessions as part of trade negotiations. The options the PRC government has reportedly debated advancing include a declaratory policy shift to "oppose Taiwan independence" and/or an effort to gain American endorsement of the possibility of "peaceful reunification" between Taiwan and China.²⁰ In either case, the PRC purpose would be to induce a policy shift that is subtle enough not to activate backlash from the Congress or the American public, while significant enough to

accelerate Beijing's longstanding effort to demoralize the Taiwan people, douse their will to fight, and sap support from the Lai Administration.²¹

The intended effects of this approach are consistent with the PRC's long-term strategy. As this committee has long appreciated, even modest delays to arms sales could affect Taiwan's fate, and seemingly semantic changes to longstanding declaratory policy could have far-reaching effects on both sides of the Strait and globally, as these policy positions are statements of American commitment and resolve. With the possibility of as many as four leader-level meetings or more over the course of 2026, Xi will have multiple opportunities to attempt to advance his latest gambit.

Recommendations for the Select Committee

Since 1979 and on a bicameral, bipartisan basis, the U.S. Congress has helped to ensure that Taiwan policy remain consistent and strong. In the coming months and with the leadership of this committee, the Congress should take decisive action to disabuse the notion in Beijing that Taiwan is on the negotiating table. These actions are necessary to reinforce the credibility of U.S. commitments in Taipei, Beijing, and around the world, for the sake of preserving peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. Steps include:

Reaffirm the Taiwan Relations Act. Consistent with this Committee's strong recommendation to ensure clear signaling to the CCP, Congress must make certain ahead of April that the PRC understands that U.S. policy towards Taiwan is not linked to trade talks. On a bipartisan, bicameral basis, and before the end of March, Congress should pass a resolution reaffirming unflinching support for the Taiwan Relations Act and other key elements of Taiwan policy, as well as the Congress' role therein. The Congress should also redouble its efforts to pass the Six Assurances to Taiwan Act (H.R. 3452, S. 3208) into law ahead of the President's visit.²² Doing so would reduce doubt in Taiwan and many other allied capitals that the PRC may succeed in cleaving critical concessions from the United States.

Recognize that Words Matter. Beyond the Six Assurances, Congress should codify the other essential elements of U.S policy toward Taiwan to limit the PRC's ability to reinterpret or litigate them. Similar to H.R. 145, which seeks to push back on the PRC's conflation of UN Resolution 2758 with its One-China Principle and the United States One China Policy, a single resolution could list out policy elements, including the One China Policy, TRA, Six Assurances, Taiwan Travel Act, support for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, opposition to unilateral changes to the status quo, and emphasize that Taiwan's future should be determined peacefully consistent with the wishes of Taiwan's people. This could serve as a basis for combatting PRC disinformation and against further encroachment by Beijing.

Build Upon the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act. Congress should assume that Beijing will continue to try to chip away at U.S. support for Taiwan and should require that

the Administration report on the full implementation of its Taiwan policy, including the schedules and execution of existing dialogues and existing training programs, and preparations to offer periodic, large-scale arms packages to support Taiwan's defense needs. Congress should closely monitor the full implementation of the Taiwan Security Cooperation Initiative and should expeditiously pass the PORCUPINE Act (S. 1744) to shorten the delivery time on critical defense articles.²³

Support Taiwan's Ability to Resist Grey Zone Coercion. Building upon NDAA funding to Taiwan's Coast Guard, Congress must also recognize the need to support Taiwan's ability to resist so-called grey zone coercion. International private-public partnerships may be able to help Taiwan better identify and respond to deepfake and AI-generated video content, and AI-enabled technologies may be able to help Taiwan better monitor ADIZ and median line crossings. With this Committee's leadership, Congress should work to identify the forms of grey zone coercion on which Taiwan is in most need of support to expand this work immediately.

Support Taiwan's Election Security for 2026 and 2028. Trends in PRC coercion and concerns about hardening public opinion on Taiwan suggest a high likelihood of systematic, massive, and potentially damaging multi-domain interference in Taiwan's 2028 Presidential Election. Congress should insert a provision into the next NDAA requiring the United States and other like-minded allies to develop a strategy in support of Taipei's efforts to monitor, combat, and expose this interference ahead of 2028, and this Committee should press the Administration to provide support to 2026 local elections too. The Select Committee should also encourage the Trump Administration to consider Taiwan's considerable investments in whole-of-society resilience spending alongside its efforts to advance a significant supplemental defense budget as part of its efforts to contribute to its own defense. The Congress should also continue to press for faster defense reform in Taiwan.²⁴

Take Action to Address Economic Coercion of Taiwan and its Partners. Members have previously considered legislation, such as the Countering Economic Coercion Act (H.R. 1135) and the STAND with Taiwan Act (S. 4789) that anticipate and respond to PRC economic coercion of Taiwan. This Committee should lead the charge in demonstrating continued bipartisan, bicameral interests in supporting Taiwan and its partners in resisting Beijing's coercive practices. Initial efforts by this committee could use defense procurement to reduce the impact on partners, including Taiwan, of Chinese trade restrictions as the Congress works to institute a more systematic approach to combat Chinese economic coercion. The Congress must also confront the role of economic coercion in the PRC's ongoing efforts to realign Taiwan's diplomatic partners, including the recent case of Lithuania, and should advance the Taiwan Allies Fund Act (S. 1216, H.R. 8358).

Do Not Allow the Extreme to Become Routine and Keep Taiwan's Most Powerful Partners Mobilized. While the steep upward trend in PRC coercion makes it increasingly

difficult to respond to, the United States should ensure that together with close allies, it responds consistently, clearly, and forcefully to brazen PRC actions. When the PRC launches unprecedented military exercises or interferes in Taiwan's elections, the executive and legislative branches should be unified in calling attention to the threat alongside other like-minded allies and reaffirm their commitments; likewise, if allies like Japan are targeted by the PRC using Taiwan as a pretext, they should expect diplomatic support from Congress as well as the executive. Moreover, and building upon the successes of the last five years, Congress should ask the Administration to report on a classified basis its ongoing efforts to keep Indo-Pacific and European allies engaged on issues related to Taiwan. These should include initiatives critical force posture and planning initiatives in Japan, Australia, and the Philippines and diplomatic efforts with the ROK to encourage greater engagement by Seoul. Taiwan should remain on the G7's agenda, central to the Indo-Pacific Four's interactions with NATO, and European and Indo-Pacific allies should all be preparing to offer assistance and support against PRC coercion in the 2028 election cycle.

Ensure US-Taiwan Ties Are Institutional. Congress should underscore the importance of sustained engagement with all major political parties on Taiwan, not just the ruling party. Over-identification with any one party risks playing into the PRC narrative that US-Taiwan ties are partisan rather than institutional, and risks the further politicization of the partnership in ways that may be inimical to long-term stability. A balanced approach helps ensure continuity in the relationship regardless of domestic political shifts, preserves the credibility of US engagement, and avoids unintentional interactions with partisan polarization within Taiwan's democracy.

Conclusion. A stronger, more resilient Taiwan requires accelerated efforts to strengthen conventional deterrence as well as to respond to the PRC's daily, accelerating use of peacetime coercion. But in this moment, Taiwan's security also requires a unified and unmistakable message from the U.S. Congress: the longstanding, strong, and bipartisan U.S. support for Taiwan endures.

With an unprecedented level of planned bilateral diplomatic engagement, 2026 may be one of the most consequential years for US-China relations in modern diplomacy. The world — and particularly the PRC — look to the Congress to signal clearly and unequivocally that the United States support for Taiwan is unflagging.

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