

# MP-IDSA

## *Issue Brief*

# Taiwanese Assessments and Responses to 'United Front' Threats

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## **S***ummary*

Taiwan views 'united front' threats from China to include threats to its sovereignty, threats from infiltration and espionage activities targeting its military, threats to obscure the national identity of the Taiwanese, threats from infiltration into Taiwanese society through cross-strait exchanges and threats that use “integrated development” to attract Taiwanese businesspeople and youth.

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which does not espouse the One China principle in any form, came to power in Taiwan in 2016. It has won subsequent elections in 2020 and 2024 as well. China sees it as a party that seeks Taiwan’s *de jure* independence from it. Consequently, tensions have risen and instability has increased in the Taiwan Strait since 2016. In this backdrop, determining the probabilities of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, and Taiwan’s capabilities and preparedness to repel the invasion, have generally dominated discussions.

However, Taiwan’s threat perception *vis-à-vis* China is not limited to a probable Chinese invasion. It navigates a complex security scenario, which includes various elements of grey zone warfare. For the Taiwanese, grey zone warfare is not limited to low intensity skirmishes or a low-scale projection of military threats. It also covers what they term China’s various ‘united front’ activities involving the cultivation of “local collaborators” to shape Taiwanese society’s opinion in favour of China’s position on cross-Strait ties.

This Brief studies Taiwan’s threat perceptions and responses to what it views as China’s ‘united front’ strategy. It relies on primary documents released by the presidential office and Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), which is “officially authorised as the agency responsible for overall planning and handling of Mainland [China] affairs”.<sup>1</sup>

## Taiwan’s Identification of ‘United Front’ Threats

Taiwan’s President Lai Ching-te has identified the following five ‘united front’ threats from China to Taiwan:

1. Threats to Taiwan’s sovereignty;
2. Threats from infiltration and espionage activities targeting military;
3. Threats to obscure the national identity of the Taiwanese;
4. Threats from united front infiltration into Taiwanese society through cross-strait exchanges; and
5. Threats from China using “integrated development” to attract Taiwanese businesspeople and youth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [“An Introduction: Origin of the MAC”](#), Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Republic of China (Taiwan).

The words “Mainland China” and “the mainland” have fallen out of political fashion in Taiwan. They are generally used by those who have a strong One China conviction. However, owing to historical complexities, the word “Mainland China” continues to be part of the legal lexicon concerning cross-Strait relations. The very name Mainland Affairs Council is an example in this regard. In this Brief, the words “China”, “Mainland China” and “the mainland” have been used to closely reflect political and official contexts.

<sup>2</sup> [“President Lai Holds Press Conference Following High-Level National Security Meeting”](#), Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), 13 March 2025.

Lai declared 17 strategies to deal with these threats. These strategies emphasise building broad-based unity in Taiwan, projecting externally Taiwan’s resolve to defend itself, overhauling of existing military trial and personnel management systems while ensuring the maintenance of discipline among serving and retired military personnel, countering China’s ‘integrated development’ that may encourage dual loyalty, inculcating loyalty to Taiwan among naturalised individuals from China, Hong Kong and Macao, raising awareness about travel, exchange and employment-related risks involving China, Hong Kong and Macao, and increasing social awareness about voluntarily disclosing exchanges with Chinese organisations.<sup>3</sup>

While Lai outlined these ‘united front’ threats and offered his 17-point strategy, Taiwan has been implementing the newly delineated security blue-print for many years. Its efforts to deal with the ‘united front’ threats have been seen in the legislative realm, in reinforcing discipline over civil servants and military personnel, issuing travel advisories and ‘streamlining’ people-to-people exchanges.

## Strengthening Legislative Architecture for Security

The relevant articles of Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (cross-Strait Act), as amended and promulgated in 2003, and the 2004 public notice issued by the MAC, prohibits Taiwanese citizens “from becoming a member of or holding a position in any political, governmental or military organisations of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)”.<sup>4</sup> However, the government felt that since then, the “structure of the CCP’s political, governmental, and military organisations” have undergone many changes, which required revision of the existing provisions. Therefore, in May 2024, it updated the appendix to the 2004 public notice in order to cover the present “political, governmental, and military organisations of the CCP”.<sup>5</sup>

In short, Taipei has expanded the list of institutions covered. It now includes organisations such as the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits, the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, the All-China Youth Federation, and Confucius Institutes and their affiliates in various forms. The Taiwanese government believes that these organisations and their affiliates are “involved in matters concerning national identity, national loyalty, or united-front work against Taiwan, [and they] may jeopardise national security or interests of Taiwan”.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> [“Explanation of Amendments to the Appendix to the Public Notice Regarding the Provision That ‘Any Individual, Juristic Person, Organization, or Other Institution of the Taiwan Area Shall Not Hold Any Position or Become Any Member of the Agencies, Institutions or Organizations of the Mainland Area which are Political Parties, the Military, the Administration or of Any Political Nature’”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 2 May 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Furthermore, the government emphasises that “Taiwanese citizens are prohibited from establishing household registrations in Mainland China and from obtaining or using a mainland Chinese passport” under the cross-Strait Act.<sup>7</sup> In line with this strict approach, it has initiated actions against certain Taiwanese citizens who were accused of holding CCP posts, interfering in elections in Taiwan on its behalf and having a household registration in Mainland China, leading to the annulment of the accused’s household registration in Taiwan and stripping of Taiwanese citizenship.<sup>8</sup>

Taiwan promulgated the Anti-Infiltration Act in January 2020. The act prohibits broadly five types of activities—“donating to a political party, canvassing, lobbying, disrupting rallies and assemblies, undermining social order, and spreading disinformation” “at the instruction or commission of or with the financial support” of “hostile external forces”.<sup>9</sup> It declares these activities as punishable illegal activities. At the time of the enactment of the law, the government explained that the law was necessary due to the inadequacy of existing laws, such as the Political Donations Act, Referendum Act, Lobbying Act, and Election and Recall Act, to curb “local collaborators”.<sup>10</sup>

However, under the Act, only conscious involvement in the aforementioned activities constitutes a crime. This clarification was necessary to allay apprehensions of various stakeholders such as businessmen, students, cross-Strait family relatives, religious persons and tourists, etc. The government assured that the Act does not target “lawful” and “normal” cross-Strait exchanges or any particular party or “position”. “Simple contacts”, without any criminal involvement with Mainland China or even with the “infiltration sources” do not “automatically” constitute criminal activities. It assured that further elaboration of actions constituting a crime is specified and stipulated in detail in the Act, and due judicial recourse would be available for the accused.<sup>11</sup>

The Taiwanese government views “red infiltration”, allegedly promoted by the CCP in Taiwanese media and society, as part of its “united front infiltration activities”. In its

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<sup>7</sup> [“Taiwanese Citizens Are Prohibited from Holding Positions in the CCP’s Political, Governmental or Military Organizations and from Establishing Household Registrations in Mainland China. Violation of the Latter Would Lead to the Annulment of One’s Household Registration in Taiwan and Thus the Deprivation of One’s Taiwanese Citizenship”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 22 May 2024.

<sup>8</sup> [“Taiwanese Citizen Fined for Illegally Serving as Member of the CPPCC by the Ministry of the Interior in Consultation with the MAC”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 7 April 2023; [“Taiwanese Citizens Are Prohibited from Holding Positions in the CCP’s Political, Governmental or Military Organizations and from Establishing Household Registrations in Mainland China. Violation of the Latter Would Lead to the Annulment of One’s Household Registration in Taiwan and Thus the Deprivation of One’s Taiwanese Citizenship”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 22 May 2024.

<sup>9</sup> [“Legislative Yuan Passes Anti-Infiltration Bill to Strengthen Defense for Democracy and Preserve Stable and Orderly Cross-Strait Exchanges”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 31 December 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; [“Statement on the Promulgation and Implementation of the Anti-Infiltration Act Today”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 15 January 2020.

view, this “red infiltration” undermines press freedom in Taiwan by spreading “false information” to shape public opinion on “key issues ... in ways that benefit political candidates with pro-Beijing views”.<sup>12</sup> Here, “key issues” alludes to the nature of cross-Strait relations, on which there is a fundamental divergence between both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Therefore, in July 2019, it amended the National Security Act to prohibit people from “establishing, sponsoring, hosting, manipulating, commanding, or developing organisations for Mainland China”, with the possibility of imprisonment and hefty financial penalties.<sup>13</sup> The government then informed that the case of “a certain media conglomerate... taking editorial instructions from Mainland China’s Taiwan Affairs Office” was under investigation.<sup>14</sup> It should be recalled that the July 2019 amendment to the National Security Act and the 2020 Anti-Infiltration Act were implemented in the run-up to the 2020 presidential elections, when the Taiwanese government accused China of meddling in Taiwan’s electoral process.

Separately, Taiwan has been concerned about China’s alleged “relentless attempts at stealing technologies from Taiwan’s industries”.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, in May 2022, Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan (parliament) passed amendments to the cross-Strait Act in order to “maintain Taiwan’s overall economic and industrial advantages and prevent national security and interests from being jeopardised by the illicit offshoring or transfer of Taiwan’s industries and technology...”.<sup>16</sup> The amendments sought to “establish a review mechanism for travel to Mainland China by personnel who are engaged in national core technology business that are commissioned by, receive grant from, or are funded by government agencies (institutions) of a certain level”.<sup>17</sup>

The mechanism also applied to “those who are involved in the said business or had resigned from their jobs in the said business whose commission, grant, or funding had completed or ended less than 3 years ago”.<sup>18</sup> They also sought to curb illegal capital investments and conduct of business by Mainland China in Taiwan “through proxies”. These amendments enabled the government to “protect ‘trade secrets involving national core technology’”.<sup>19</sup> The amendments have stipulated prison sentences and heavy fines for violations of the law.

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<sup>12</sup> [“Taiwan’s Media and Press Independence is Protected by Laws which Strictly Prohibit Foreign Infiltration and Interference in the Workings of Taiwan’s Free and Democratic Society”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 17 July 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> [“Legislative Yuan Passes the ‘Draft Amendments to Part of the Provisions of the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area’ to Prevent Illicit Transfer of Core Technology and Illegal Talent Poaching”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 20 May 2022.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

## Discipline Management in Civil Servants and Military Personnel

China’s espionage network in the Taiwanese military has emerged as a serious concern for the government. Recently, President Lai informed that in 2024, 28 serving and 15 retired military personnel were “charged with suspicion of involvement in spying for China”.<sup>20</sup> The numbers in the year 2024 saw a big spike. Serving and retired military personnel represented 43 per cent and 23 per cent, respectively, of total cases in their category. Cumulatively, they represented 66 per cent of the total present cases.<sup>21</sup>

In order to curb espionage cases, the Taiwan government is considering reinstating “the military trial system to handle military related criminal cases involving active-duty servicemen”.<sup>22</sup> President Lai has declared that he intends to “bring military justice back to the front line”.<sup>23</sup> The system, if reinstated, will try “subversion, espionage and dereliction of duty, and insubordination” *inter alia*.<sup>24</sup> The reinstatement, abolished in 2013, will “require legislative approval”.<sup>25</sup>

Recently, the Taiwanese government has become concerned about some current civil servants, military personnel and public-school educators possibly having household registrations in Mainland China. The concern emanates from its assessment that the Chinese government is encouraging Taiwanese citizens “to relocate and establish household registration in Mainland China” without requiring them to renounce their Taiwanese “identification documents” in order to “blur Taiwanese citizens’ national identity” and undermine “Taiwan’s social stability”.<sup>26</sup>

Taiwanese authorities believe that this approach is in line with China’s promotion of an “integrated development”.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the government has tasked the relevant agencies to “conduct a comprehensive review of existing laws, establish defensive mechanisms, and implement effective regulations to mitigate” such risks which are “associated with cross-Strait exchanges”.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> [“President Lai Holds Press Conference Following High-Level National Security Meeting”](#), Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), 13 March 2025.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Teng Pei-ju and Kuo Chien-shen, [“Lai Seeks to Reinstate Military Trials amid Growing Chinese Infiltration”](#), *Focus Taiwan*, 13 March 2025.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> [“Government Launches Special Review and Awareness Campaign for Active Military Personnel, Public Officials, and Public School Educators in Response to CCP’s Undermining of the Cross-Strait Single Household Registration System, Safeguarding National Security and Ensuring Peace of Mind for All Citizens”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 13 March 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

The government has informed that 676 individuals lost their Taiwanese household registration from 2014 to 2023 because they were found holding concurrent household registrations in Mainland China.<sup>29</sup> Although none of them were civil servants belonging to the aforementioned categories, it has been recently discovered that some government personnel possess Chinese identity documents. Yet, the government has shown leniency because it believes that this issue has arisen from the lack of harmonisation between the “single household registration system” and the recruitment regulations. Instead, it has focussed on raising awareness and giving them a chance to “voluntarily disclose and proactively renounce” their Chinese identity cards to avoid “serious repercussions”.<sup>30</sup>

The impression this author has gathered from his conversations with some of his Taiwanese interlocutors suggests that the government’s lenient approach appears to be recognising the ground reality of cross-Strait relations that has changed in the last few decades. As a result of the deep economic and social cross-Strait integration that has happened in recent decades, many Taiwanese citizens are born in Mainland China or move there in their early childhood and then return to Taiwan. In this process, many of them may have acquired Chinese identity cards, etc., which they may have continued to possess for a variety of non-criminal motives. The government seems to be recognising this reality in its handling of the issue.

The government has rejected a proposal mooted by some legislators that former deputy ministers, retired major generals and even higher ranking generals, and retired officials handling foreign affairs, mainland affairs, national security and intelligence gathering should be treated as private citizens and allowed to participate in ceremonies or activities organised by the “political party, military, administrative or political agencies (institutions) or organisations of the mainland area”.<sup>31</sup> It is of the opinion that these figures “maintain a distinct status even after leaving their public or military positions, distinguishing them from the general public”.<sup>32</sup>

Allowing them to participate in activities in the mainland would “undermine national dignity [and] would have a profound impact on public morale and confidence”.<sup>33</sup> They will continue to be strictly governed by the existing regulations, violations of which may cost them their pensions and entitlements and even their pensions may be recovered for violations. The government has yet again made it clear that “serving

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> [\*\*“The Government Opposes Abolishing Penalties for Retired Generals Participating in CCP’s Party, Political, and Military Activities in Mainland China that Undermine National Dignity”\*\*](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 13 November 2024.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

civil servants and retired or discharged personnel in specific capacities must have permission or apply for approval to ‘enter’ Mainland China”.<sup>34</sup>

## Travel Advisories

The Taiwanese authorities have noted that as a result of expansive security laws in Mainland China, travel to the mainland, Hong Kong and Macao has become fraught with risks. These laws include the revised Anti-Espionage Law 2023, the amended Law on Guarding State Secrets 2024, and the 22-point Guidelines for Punishing Taiwan Independence Separatists issued in June 2024. In addition, they have voiced concerns about the Implementation Rules for Article 43 of the Chinese Law on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, entered into force on 7 July 2020. Furthermore, they have also warned the citizens about Beijing’s encouragement to its citizens to provide tips regarding “alleged violations” of these laws.

This mass crowd-driven surveillance may cause various unforeseen inconveniences and problems for innumerable reasons and motives. Taiwanese authorities have noted that the Taiwanese citizens travelling to the mainland, Hong Kong and Macao have reportedly been subjected to different kinds of harassment. More importantly, as per government data, 89 Taiwanese have gone “missing” or have been “detained” during their travel to China from 1 January 2024 to 30 April 2025. Many of them have been sent to “detention and interrogation”, and several of them had their personal freedom “restricted”.<sup>35</sup>

To deal with the situation, the government had launched “Online Registration System for Taiwanese Citizens Visiting Hong Kong and Macao” in October 2019. Later in January 2023, it launched the same portal service for Taiwanese visiting Mainland China. Previously, the government has been running “a text service” to notify Taiwanese citizens of “sources of potential emergency” since 2014.<sup>36</sup> Registration on

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<sup>34</sup> [“MAC Issues a Letter of Interpretation Clarifying Questions over the Application of the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area: Confirms that Civil Servants Transferring Flights in the Mainland ‘Enter’ Mainland China, but does not Expand Management Regulations”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 17 March 2017.

<sup>35</sup> [“Taiwan Reports 89 Citizens Missing or Detained in China”](#), *Taiwan News*, 21 May 2025; [“MAC Sponsors TAA’s Three Information Sessions on Travel Precautions and the Online Registration System for Visiting Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao; Third Session Successfully Held Today in Taichung”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 28 April 2025. Incidentally, such cases are not new. The much-highlighted case of the arrest of Li Ming-che in mainland China took place in March 2017, with Ming being finally released in April 2022. [“Being a Civilized Country under the Rule of Law Begins with the Case of Li Ming-che!”: Government Calls on the Relevant Departments of the CCP to Disclose Information on Li Ming-che’s Release and Promptly Allow Mr. Li to Safely Return to Taiwan”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 18 March 2022; [“Mainland China Announced Mr. Li Ming-che’s Release and Return to Taiwan. MAC Will Make Related Plans and Hopes for a Prompt, Safe, and Smooth Return of Mr. Li Ming-che”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 13 April 2022.

<sup>36</sup> [“Taiwan Reports 89 Citizens Missing or Detained in China”](#), no. 35; [“The ‘Online Registration System for Taiwanese Citizens Visiting Mainland China’ Goes Live for the Public”](#), Mainland Affairs

the portal is voluntary but strongly encouraged. Since its launch in January 2023, 86,387 persons availed its service till the end of April 2025.<sup>37</sup> This author has perceived a universal sense of caution among Taiwanese scholars, with whom he has interacted recently, about travelling to China.

### ‘Streamlining’ People-to-People Exchanges

The Straits Forum, established by China in 2009, is an annual event to promote cross-strait relations. Thus far, 16 iterations have been organised. The 17<sup>th</sup> iteration is reported to be scheduled in June 2025. DPP governments in Taipei have taken a stand against it, issuing several position papers that term it as part of the CCP’s ‘united front’ activity. The government has prohibited Straits Forum-related activities in Taiwan, held either “independently or in collaboration with mainland Chinese authorities”.<sup>38</sup> It has banned central government personnel from participating in it, and discourages local government officials from attending.

The Taiwan government advises “public and private organisations, individuals, civic groups, and political parties” to be mindful that their participation in the Forum not violate Taiwan’s laws.<sup>39</sup> They should be aware that they cannot “independently” sign “agreements, memorandums, or any other documents with mainland Chinese authorities” and should not end up indulging in “illegal cooperation or forming alliances with mainland Chinese authorities”.<sup>40</sup> No Taiwanese participant of any type can participate in any “democratic consultations” that in the Taiwanese government’s view are “aimed at eliminating the Republic of China, and promotion of the ‘One Country, Two Systems Model for Taiwan’”.<sup>41</sup> Besides, participants are reminded that they should be aware of risks associated with travelling to China.

Thus, the Taiwanese government does not prohibit academic, cultural and people-to-people exchange. However, it can be observed that a certain sense of political and ideological correctness is expected from Taiwanese who express views on cross-strait relations. In one instance, the MAC issued a statement stating that

Certain Taiwanese artists... have deliberately echoed the CCP’s position seeking to erase the Republic of China’s (ROC) national sovereignty by reposting official mainland Chinese government’s content... a small

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Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 16 January 2023; [“MAC Condemns Implementation Rules for Article 43 of the National Security Law on Hong Kong and Urges Hong Kong to Explain and Guarantee the Due Rights, Freedom, and Safety of Taiwanese Institutions and People in Hong Kong”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 7 July 2020.

<sup>37</sup> [“Taiwan Reports 89 Citizens Missing or Detained in China”](#), no. 35.

<sup>38</sup> [“MAC Policy Position on the CPP ‘Straits Forum’”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 6 June 2024.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

number of Taiwanese artists, driven by personal career interests in Mainland China, have repeatedly parroted CCP rhetoric that undermines Taiwan’s sovereignty, deeply offending the sentiments of the Taiwanese people... the government strongly condemns such actions.<sup>42</sup>

Taiwanese interlocutors shared with this author that there is no ban on having scholarly exchanges with the mainland scholars and institutions. However, the review and approval process for inviting or hosting scholars from the mainland has been made lengthy and cumbersome to render scholarly exchange an extreme test of patience. Besides, it is expected from the hosts that their guests from the mainland stick to the stated purpose of their arrival, avoid media, etc., and do not get involved in any politically “inappropriate behaviour” while in Taiwan.

Such stringent conditions create disincentives with regard to invitations to mainland scholars. This author could perceive a sense of suppression in a section of scholars. Furthermore, apart from countering security concerns under the perceived ‘united front’ strategy, the government seems to be using tightening of cross-Strait exchanges, including scholarly exchanges, as a response to China’s refusal to engage Taiwan in dialogue.

Further, Taiwanese authorities have strictly handled Chinese visitors who are accused of engaging “in inappropriate behaviour that violated the principles of parity and dignity” between Taiwan and Mainland China.<sup>43</sup> They show no leniency to visitors, who indulge in actions that demean “Taiwan’s autonomous status”.<sup>44</sup> In such cases, the violators have been immediately deported. The government has tightened its scrutiny of Chinese media reporters stationed in Taiwan. It has sought to ensure that they and their host strictly observe the conditions under which they have been allowed to work.<sup>45</sup>

In addition, the government has even deported some Chinese spouses<sup>46</sup> who were accused of violating “the laws by making statements that express support for the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) use of military force against Taiwan, undermine

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<sup>42</sup> [“The MAC Strongly Condemns Certain Taiwanese Artists for Echoing CCP Rhetoric Undermining ROC Sovereignty and Launches Investigation Under Cross-Strait Regulations”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 8 March 2025.

<sup>43</sup> [“MAC Reiterates that While in Taiwan, Mainland Chinese Individuals Must Not Engage in Conduct That Undermines Our Sovereignty, Downgrades Taiwan, or Violates Our Laws and Regulations; Violators Will Be Dealt with in Accordance with Law”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 3 October 2024.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> [“Regarding Media Reports of Mainland Chinese Reporter’s Involvement in Taiwanese Political Commentary Program, Investigation Concluded by MAC in Consultation with Competent Authorities Ministry of Culture and National Communications Commission”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 9 July 2024.

<sup>46</sup> Huang Li-yun, Chen Chun-hua et al., [“Chinese Spouse Leaves Taiwan Hours before Scheduled Deportation”](#), *Focus Taiwan*, 25 March 2025; Keoni Everington, [“Taiwan Forcibly Deports Chinese Influencer”](#), *Taiwan News*, 1 April 2025.

the sovereignty of the Republic of China, and advocate for its elimination” on social media platforms.<sup>47</sup> It asserted that “the competent authority, the Ministry of the Interior, has acted in accordance with the law by ordering the individuals to depart within a specified time-frame or by enforcing their deportation”,<sup>48</sup> applying legal standards which are “consistent with those adopted by democratic countries governed by the rule of law in regulating the conduct of foreigners after entry...”.<sup>49</sup>

The government states that only very few Chinese spouses have shown such tendencies. These cases are complex. While the government appears to be legally and procedurally correct, its power to interpret the laws is very wide and their implementation always has an element of selectivity. The cases under question have generated a debate over issues of free speech in Taiwan, the ambiguous citizenship status of Chinese spouses in Taiwan and the empathy for the affected families.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

It is evident that Taiwan faces a complex security environment. Owing to complex dynamics and the historical conditions of cross-Strait relations, challenges that emanate from China to Taiwan’s security have taken myriad forms. The Taiwanese government has been cognizant of this and has been doing the needful to tackle these challenges. The question is whether China has succeeded in infiltrating Taiwanese society and institutions through its ‘united front’ activities. The answer to this question can be summarised in the words of a Taiwanese interlocutor: “We can’t say that they have succeeded. They keep trying and we keep countering them.”

Indeed, it is a continuous struggle. The surveys authorised by the government show the public support for its measures,<sup>51</sup> and a benign support for the government can be felt in the society. Yet the government needs to maintain a fine balance especially when it comes to implementing counter ‘united front’ measures. Democracy and freedom are the hallmarks of Taiwan. The empathy and support Taiwan receives in the world is largely due to this capital. Taiwan’s fragile security environment cannot afford anything less than a broad-based unity of the Taiwanese public.

<sup>47</sup> [“Deportation of Mainland Chinese Spouses Who Have Violated the Law Is a Necessary and Lawful Act of the Government; CCP Is in No Position to Make Gratuitous Remarks”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 1 April 2025.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Kao Hua-chien, Huang Li-yun and Sunny Lai, [“Chinese Spouse Protests Taiwan Deportation Outside Ministry”](#), *Focus Taiwan*, 25 March 2025; Michael Turton, [“Notes from Central Taiwan: The Yaya in Taiwan Case: Free Speech at Stake?”](#), *Taipei Times*, 17 March 2025; Rath Wang, [“Are Deportations Undermining Taiwan’s Freedom of Speech?”](#), *Commonwealth Magazine*, 23 April 2025.

<sup>51</sup> [“Taiwanese Public Opinion Backs Government Measures to Counter CCP’s United Front Infiltration and Defend National Sovereignty and Security”](#), Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (TAIWAN), 24 April 2025.

## About the Author



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