



IMAGE – Sunflower protests in Taiwan / Jeffrey Cuvillier, uploaded 30 March 2014 via FLOKRI

Chinese public diplomacy in Taiwan

NATIONS INVOLVED: People's Republic of China (China),
The Republic of China (Taiwan)

TIME PERIOD: 2004 – 2018

THEMATIC AREA: Exploitation of ethnic or cultural identities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The People's Republic of China's 'One China' principle is a fundamental part of China's foreign policy. It plays a large role in China's relations with other countries including Taiwan and, more recently, has been included in the Communist Party of China's 2049 'National Rejuvenation' centenary goals.^{1,2}

China engages in public diplomacy – the means of engaging with foreign publics in service of the national interest – in Taiwan in an attempt to persuade the Taiwanese public of the benefits of one China subordinated to Beijing. In recent years, opinion polls of Taiwanese views on reunification and national identity indicate the results of these efforts have been mixed.

China also makes its 'One China' principle a non-negotiable aspect of its relations with other countries. This is part of a campaign to cut off ties with Taiwan in an attempt to force Taiwan to come to the negotiation table.

While Chinese efforts may not have curbed Taiwan's growing sense of national identity, this activity should be viewed within the context of China's broader presence on the international stage, its increasing economic and military might; China's ambitions to 'rejuvenate and reunify the great Chinese nation'; and China's continued refusal to rule out the rule of force to achieve reunification.

KEY POINTS

■ Opinion polls in Taiwan have shown that Chinese public diplomacy and soft power efforts in Taiwan have not led to more support for unification, nor a growing sense of pan-Chinese identity. A reason for this might be the generational gap: in particular the younger generation no longer have strong family and cultural ties to the Mainland. Some segments of the Taiwanese population might find China attractive from a pragmatic point of view – young people in particular are more open to studying and working in the Mainland – but China's political culture and socialist market economy are lacking appeal.

■ Mainland China, not least due to its autocratic system, is able to pursue its coercive measures and public diplomacy efforts with governmental coherence and a unifying narrative of 'One China'. In contrast, Taiwan has no such domestic consensus on national identity. Political parties in Taiwan differ over where Taiwan's roots lie, disagreeing on whether Taiwanese identity and language should mirror that of Mainland China, or whether a distinctly Taiwanese identity should be nurtured.

■ Public diplomacy is a process of 'government to people' communication through engagement with foreign publics, using words and deeds to shape public opinion, but there should be boundaries. Such activities should be deemed hostile if they attempt to influence the population in a way that threatens to be hurtful to the target nation or undermines the ruling authority.

¹ Richard Bush, "What Xi Jinping Said about Taiwan at the 19th Party Congress," *The Brookings Institution*, 19 October 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/19/what-xi-jinping-said-about-taiwan-at-the-19th-party-congress/>

² Deng Yuwen, "Is China Planning to Take Taiwan by Force in 2020?" *South China Morning Post*, 3 January 2018, <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2126541/china-planning-take-taiwan-force-2020>

SUMMARY

Ever since the Chinese Civil War of 1939 – 1945 resulted in the incumbent Kuomintang (KMT) fleeing to the island of Taiwan while the victorious Communist Party set up a communist state, Taiwan and China have operated under two different authorities, each claiming to be the legitimate ruler of greater China.

In 1992, a historic meeting took place in which leaders from each side of the Taiwan Straits met and forged an agreement on the existence of one China which became known as the ‘1992 Consensus.’

While China’s commitment to the principle of ‘One China’ has been unwavering since the founding of the ‘People’s Republic of China’ in 1949, Taiwan has been more ambivalent, most especially in recent years. Changes in public opinion polls, the emergence of anti-China protest movements and pro-independence civil society groups and the election of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 2000 and 2016 suggest a declining desire for reunification.

Since the early noughties, and most especially since the 2016 election of pro-independence Tsai Ing-wen, China has engaged in a more assertive approach to achieving reunification, including the use of public diplomacy in Taiwan. In the diplomatic sphere, China’s Taiwan Affairs Office organises meetings between senior personnel and representatives of Taiwan’s pro-China business, student and teacher communities living and working in Taiwan. In the information sphere, China attempts to influence the media by encouraging pro-China business people to buy Taiwanese media outlets and purchasing advertorial space to publish pro-China content. They also organise and fund cultural, religious and business-related events which promote a latent pan-Chinese identity. In the economic and legal spheres, China runs various programmes to encourage Taiwanese businesses to develop links with the Mainland; China has also implemented legal measures to make it easier for Taiwanese people to study, live and work in the Mainland.

There has been no observed increase in the numbers of people supporting reunification - in fact, opinion polls indicate an increase in the numbers of people who want to maintain the status quo and who identify as ‘Taiwanese’ over ‘Chinese.’ This should be seen in the context of other measures employed by China to bring about de facto reunification. These measures include reducing the ability of Taiwan to engage in international affairs (by reducing the number of countries maintaining official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, by blocking Taiwanese involvement in multilateral meetings and by pressuring international organisations and private companies to not list Taiwan as an independent country). China’s efforts should also be seen in the wider context of the improvement and modernisation of the Chinese military and Beijing’s continued refusal to rule out the use of force in achieving reunification, overseen by President Xi Jinping, the most ambitious Chinese ruler since Mao.³

³ Kerry Brown, “Q. And A.: Kerry Brown on Xi Jinping and the Business of China,” Interview by Didi Kirsten Tatlow, *The New York Times*, 8 December 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-kerry-brown.html>

CONTEXT

China-Taiwan Relations

Between 1937-1945, China was fought over by three competing groups: Japan, the Nationalists (who were the governing forces) and the Communists, led by Mao Zedong. After Japan surrendered under the 1945 Potsdam Declaration, the two Chinese forces turned on each other in a civil war which lasted from 1945 until the Communists' victory in 1949. At this point, the Nationalists fled to Taiwan, setting up their own parallel government. Since then, the governing powers in Beijing and in Taipei have disputed which government is the true and legitimate ruler of China (the Mainland and Taiwan). Since the founding of the People's Republic of China (hereafter, "China") the 'One China' principle has been fundamental to Chinese foreign policy and recognition of it has been a non-negotiable aspect of its relations with other countries.

In 1992, an informal meeting between leaders of China and Taiwan resulted in the official recognition of there being 'One China' (with differing views on who had authority over China). Since then, Taiwan's official position has alternated between pro-independence and pro-One China with the government residing in Taipei. The election of the incumbent President, Tsai-Ing Wen of the pro-independence 'Democratic Progressive Party' and Tsai's refusal to formally affirm the 1992 consensus led to China taking a more hard-line and aggressive stance towards achieving the principle.

China's Public Diplomacy Efforts in Context

Over the last 14 years, China has employed several public diplomacy strategies in Taiwan to encourage a more pro-China government and public. Public diplomacy can be understood as "a country's engagement and communication with foreign publics for the sake of communicating certain narratives and images of the country to promote its soft power and thereby national interests. The instruments to achieve those objectives include listening and advocacy, international broadcasting and international exchange, cultural diplomacy, and other aspects of strategic communication such as media/psychological warfare."⁴

Whilst opinion polls on reunification and identity suggest that China's strategy in Taiwan has been unsuccessful, this should be seen within a wider context. It is thus important to understand China's public diplomacy efforts in parallel with more coercive measures being employed to bring Taiwan closer to de facto reunification. These other factors include: China's foreign relations with other nations, China's relations with global civil society and business, Taiwan's trade reliance on China, and China's increasing military strength and intent regarding reunification.

Firstly, Taiwan is economically heavily reliant on China which gives the latter leverage over Taiwan. China's is Taiwan's top trading partner: exports to China hover at about 40 per cent of Taiwan's total and, while 2017 and 2018 levels of trade with China have not reached the peak seen in 2014, they are rising: the trade between China and Taiwan during the first 11 months of 2017 was valued at USD 125.6 billion, which is 17.6 per cent higher than the

⁴Falk Hartig, "How China Understands Public Diplomacy: The Importance of National Image for National Interests," *International Studies Review*, 18 (2016), 655-80.

same period in 2016.⁵ Furthermore, many Taiwanese business people choose China for its low-cost environment, skilled workers and shared language. According to estimates from the Council on Foreign Relations, more than 93,000 Taiwanese businesses invested in China between 1988 and 2016.⁶

China is also taking proactive steps to promote the ‘One China’ policy in the international sphere. In order to have official relations with China, a foreign country must formally accept the ‘One China’ principle and, therefore, cut any official diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Due to large increases in China’s economic, political and military power over the last few decades, this principle has left Taiwan increasingly isolated on the world stage. As of mid-2018, Taiwan only has 17 official diplomatic allies, with São Tomé and Príncipe, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Burkina Faso and El Salvador all switching ties to China over the last two years.

China also promotes the ‘One China’ policy in global civil society and business; using its economic weight to ensure Taiwan is not recognised as a country. This can be seen in international prizes which have listed Taiwanese people as Chinese after pressure from Beijing and in business where airlines, hotel chains and other multinational corporations have faced pressure and sanctions from Beijing to remove Taiwan from any lists of countries.^{7,8}

Finally, China’s increasing military budget and intentions regarding Taiwan also help to progress further towards making unification a *fait accompli*, although probable international reactions to any military action constrains China’s activity. China has been modernising its military over the last decade – supported by significant increases in the defence budget every year since 1990⁹ – and since 2016 has embarked on one of the most ambitious military reorganisation projects since 1949.



Map of China and Taiwan

⁵ Shannon Tiezzi, “A Cross-Strait Chill? You Wouldn’t Know It From Taiwan’s Economic Data,” *The Diplomat*, 16 February 2018, <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2126541/china-planning-take-taiwan-force-2020>

⁶ Ralph Jennings, “Taiwan Steps up Asia Business to Reduce Dependence on China,” *VOA News*, 23 October 2017, <https://www.voanews.com/a/taiwan-increases-business-to-rebalance-economy/4082042.html>

⁷ Lily Kuo, “Man Booker Prize Criticised for Changing Taiwanese Author’s Nationality,” *The Guardian*, 3 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/03/man-booker-prize-criticised-for-changing-taiwanese-authors-nationality>

⁸ Ralph Jennings, “China Demands Companies Stop Calling Taiwan A Country – Here’s What They’ll Do,” *Forbes*, 17 January 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ralphjennings/2018/01/17/corporations-will-quickly-comply-as-china-pressure-them-to-stop-calling-taiwan-a-country/#5ada45c89bf4>

⁹ Joel Wuthnow and Phillip Saunders, *Chinese Military Reform in the Age of Xi Jinping: Drivers, Challenges, and Implications* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2017), 4.

Timeline of Key Events



¹⁰ Eleanor Albert, "China-Taiwan Relations," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 7 December 2016, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/china-taiwan-relations>

¹¹ Edward Cody, "Taiwan Voters Elect New President," 23 March 2008. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/22/AR2008032200442.html>

¹² "Sunflower seeds: Social Movements Stir Taiwan's Hyperactive Democracy," *The Economist*, 11 April 2015, <https://www.economist.com/news/asia/21648026-social-movements-stir-taiwans-hyperactive-democracy-sunflower-seeds>

¹³ J. Michael Cole, "Sunflowers End Occupation of Taiwan's Legislature," *The Diplomat*, 11 April 2014. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/04/sunflowers-end-occupation-of-taiwans-legislature/>

¹⁴ "Taiwan Says China Dangled \$3 Billion to Grab Ally Dominican Republic," *Reuters*, 1 May 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-dominicanrepublic-taiwan/taiwan-says-china-dangled-3-billion-to-grab-ally-dominican-republic-idUSKBN122LN>

¹⁵ Richard Bush, "What Xi Jinping said about Taiwan at the 19th Party Congress," *The Brookings Institution*, 19 October 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/19/what-xi-jinping-said-about-taiwan-at-the-19th-party-congress/>

Chinese Government Narratives

- **Territorial integrity is vital and China will never allow any part of Chinese territory to separate from the Mainland at any time or in any form.**
- **Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and China has unwavering commitment to achieving reunification; recognition of this is vital for any country wishing to maintain official relations with China.**
- **The Chinese government has the right to resort to any necessary means to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and achieve the reunification of the two sides of the Straits.**
- **Reunification with Taiwan is part of the “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (also known as ‘the Chinese Dream’) – Xi Jinping’s vision for China.**

Xi Jinping (习近平), President (since 2013)

Xi has been described by Professor Kerry Brown and other China Watchers as the most ambitious and charismatic leader of China since Chairman Mao Zedong.¹⁶ His (and China's) key goal - the ‘rejuvenation of the great Chinese nation’ in time for the national centenaries in 2020 and 2049 – includes a reinforced commitment to the ‘One China’ policy.^{17,18}



18 October 2017: “We will resolutely uphold national sovereignty and territorial integrity and will never tolerate a repeat of the historical tragedy of a divided country. All activities of splitting the motherland will be resolutely opposed by all the Chinese people. We have firm will, full confidence, and sufficient capability to defeat any form of Taiwan independence secession plot. We will never allow any person, any organization, or any political party to split any part of the Chinese territory from China at any time or in any form.”¹⁹

State Council Information Office (SCIO)

The ‘nerve centre’ of China's public diplomacy apparatus. The SCIO plays a watchdog role overseeing and monitoring media in China, all external communications, and internet censorship.



21 February 2000: “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. All the facts and laws about Taiwan prove that Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.”²⁰

“The Taiwan issue is one left over by the Chinese civil war. As yet, the state of hostility between the two sides of the Straits has not formally ended. To safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and realize the reunification of the two sides of the Straits, the Chinese government has the right to resort to any necessary means.”²¹

¹⁶ Kerry Brown, “Q. And A.: Kerry Brown on Xi Jinping and the Business of China,” interview by Didi Kirsten Tatlow, *The New York Times*, 8 December 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/09/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-kerry-brown.html>

¹⁷ Li Zhenguang, “Taiwan Integral to National Rejuvenation,” *China Daily*, 20 October 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/newsrepublic/2017-10/20/content_33509757.htm

¹⁸ Chun-Yi Lee, “Cross-Strait Relations in 2018,” *China Policy Institute: Analysis*, 28 December 2017, <https://cpianalysis.org/2017/12/28/cross-strait-relations-in-2018/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Taiwan Affairs Office and the Information Office of the State Council, “The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue,” *The New York Times*, 21 February 2000, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/022100china-taiwan-text.html>

²¹ Ibid.

Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council

Implements policy dictated by the State Council regarding Taiwan related matters, including trade policy; media and other information related activities as well as cultural events and outreach, exchange and visitor programmes, and international conferences.



January 2018: “The [...] Taiwanese authorities have done nothing to tackle the separatists’ activities in the Taiwan region which have threatened the Cross-Strait peace and development.”²²

In the General Secretary speeches at the Party Congresses in 2002, 2007 and 2012, the following themes on Taiwan have been present:²³

The guiding principle (fangzhen, 方针) of peaceful reunification of Taiwan according to the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ formula and the eight-point proposal enunciated by Jiang Zemin in 1995.

Adherence to the ‘One China’ principle, the key point of which is that the territory of Taiwan is within the sovereign territory of China.

- i. Strong opposition to separatism and Taiwan independence.
- ii. Willingness to have dialogue, exchanges, consultations, and negotiations with any political party that adheres to the ‘One China’ principle.
- iii. Stress on the idea that the people on Taiwan and people on the Mainland are “brothers and sisters of the same blood.”
- iv. Establishing a connection between unification and the cause of
- v. Placing hopes on the Taiwan people as a force to help bring about unification.
- vi. A promise that progress toward unification, and unification itself, will bring material benefits to Taiwan.
- vii. An expression of “utmost sincerity” by Beijing toward the unification project.

In his 2017 Party Congress speech, Xi Jinping omitted the commitment to respecting the opinion of the Chinese public.²⁴ According to analysis from The Brookings Institute, this could be related to the shifts in Taiwanese public sentiment against unification, and the electoral defeat of the KMT in 2017.

²² CGTN, “Statement Following State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office Press Conference,” YouTube video, 12:30, 16 January 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozfct-AYZWQ>

²³ Richard Bush, “What Xi Jinping Said about Taiwan at the 19th Party Congress,” *The Brookings Institution*, 19 October 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/19/what-xi-jinping-said-about-taiwan-at-the-19th-party-congress/>

²⁴ Ibid.

Taiwan Government Narratives

The Taiwanese narratives have not been consistent over the successive governments, but have changed depending on which party was in power. The key question for Taiwanese presidents is what position they take on China's insistence that the 1992 Consensus concerning 'One China' be accepted, notably its core connotation that the geographic borders of China include the island of Taiwan.

- a. **Pro-reunification views: Mainland China and Taiwan are both part of the Chinese nation; the government in Taipei is the legitimate ruler of this territory. Status quo favoured for now. Taiwanese identity is of Mainland Chinese origin; the official Mandarin language brought over in 1949 should remain.**
- b. **Pro-independence views: Taiwan is a separate country from Mainland China and should be recognised as such. Taiwanese identity is distinct from Mainland China (e.g. indigenisation policies of 2000–2008). Why should Beijing Chinese be spoken in a non-Mainland nation? What about dialects of Southern Chinese spoken in Taiwan by the settlers from the 17th century onwards, and languages of the original inhabitants and tribes pushed into the mountains by the settlers?**

Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), President (since 2016)

Tsai represents the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party. She has been more assertively anti-China and pro-independence than her predecessor, although she has continued to make commitments to maintaining the status quo.²⁵



20 May 2016: In her inauguration speech, Tsai was careful to allow each side to hear what it wanted. She spoke of her *"responsibility to safeguard the sovereignty and territory of the Republic of China,"* – allowing for interpretation of the scope of the Republic of China - and referencing to relations between *"the People of Taiwan area and the Mainland area,"* a formulation that could mean acceptance of Beijing's view that there are two areas but not two countries, or it could be heard by independence-minded Taiwanese as being consistent with a view that there are two sovereign nations.²⁶

10 October 2017: "Although we are strengthening our military capabilities, we do not seek war. We remain committed to maintaining peace and stability both in the Taiwan Strait and across the region. Meanwhile, we will continue to safeguard Taiwan's freedom, democracy, and way of life, as well as ensure the Taiwanese people's right to decide our own future. Our goodwill will not change, our commitments will not change, we will not revert to the old path of confrontation, and we will not bow to pressure."²⁷

Pan-Blue Coalition, led by Kuomintang

A coalition of parties, led by the nationalist Kuomintang party which advocates eventual reunification of Taiwan with China.²⁸



²⁵ Shannon Tiezzi, "A Cross-Strait Chill? You Wouldn't Know It From Taiwan's Economic Data," *The Diplomat*, 16 February 2018, <http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2126541/china-planning-take-taiwan-force-2020>

²⁶ Richard Bush, "Tsai's Inauguration in Taiwan: It Could Have Been Worse," *Brookings*, 23 May 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/05/23/tsais-inauguration-in-taiwan-it-could-have-been-worse/>

²⁷ "President Tsai delivers 2017 National Day Address," President Tsai's Remarks, Republic of China (Taiwan), accessed 20 April 2018, https://www.mac.gov.tw/en/News_Content.aspx?n=B7C204243029BC59&sms=29BD1E466E967AF7&s=59D7C588408B5226

²⁸ "One China' is Republic of China: MAC," *Focus Taiwan*, 17 April 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201605170022.aspx>

17 May 2016: “For us, ‘one China’ is the Republic of China, which is the greatest consensus in Taiwan’s society.”²⁹

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)

One of the two main political parties in Taiwan and current majority ruling party. It has traditionally been associated with anti-communism and pro-independence sympathies and the promotion of a separate Taiwanese identity.



1995: “Taiwan is an independent and sovereign state. It does not belong to the People’s Republic of China and it has no sovereign power over the Chinese mainland.”³⁰

Mainland Affairs Council

The Taiwanese government office tasked with Mainland-related affairs.



15 October 2017: “The Republic of China is a sovereign state [...] the government has been firm and consistent in its policy to maintain the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. It has shown the greatest goodwill and flexibility, conformed with the Asia-Pacific security interests of regional parties, and gained affirmation from the international community. The government and the 23 million people of Taiwan are absolutely firm in their conviction to defend the nation’s sovereignty, dignity, and democratic system. The authorities in Beijing require wisdom and patience to understand and face this fact pragmatically.”³¹

The Ministry of Culture

Upgraded to the ministerial level during the 2012 government reorganisation, the MOC promotes Taiwanese cultural and creative industries.



18 August 2016: “Taiwan is of course a member of the worldwide Chinese community, but I believe Taiwan is the most energetic, with more space and all kinds of possibilities for art creation or cultural creation. If we want to show the difference between Taiwan and other Chinese communities [...] I believe it is the vigor and energy of creation. This kind of innovation or creation must be developed in a free society.”³²

18 August 2016: “The more we have worries about the U.S. not caring about the outside world, the more energy and resources we must invest in people-to-people policies or public diplomacy. That’s an efficient way to change the situation.”³³

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ 1995 Min-zhu Jin-bu Dang Dang-zhang, Dang-gang (The Party Plank of the Democratic Progressive Party). Taipei: the Democratic Progressive Party.

³¹ “MAC: Beijing Needs a New Mindset to Find a New Model for Cross-Strait Interaction,” News Release, *Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (Taiwan)*, accessed 20 April 2018, https://www.mac.gov.tw/en/News_Content.aspx?n=2BA0753CBE348412&sms=E828F60C4AFBAF90&s=FEA3185CA573D3FF

³² Shannon Tiezzi, “‘Lovable’ Taiwan and Its Soft Power Quest,” *The Diplomat*, 18 August 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/lovable-taiwan-and-its-soft-power-quest/>

³³ Ibid.

MEASURES

Strategic Logic

China pursues its aim of reunification with Taiwan in several ways. First, China directly targets the Taiwanese public with public diplomacy to promote a latent pan-Chinese identity and increase public support for reunification. Secondly, China uses economic incentives to increase economic ties between China and Taiwan and Taiwanese reliance on the Mainland as well as showing the Taiwanese public the benefits of closer ties with China. Finally, China has implemented various legal measures to better facilitate Taiwanese engagement with China.

Diplomacy. China maintains a Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) which frequently makes statements regarding Taiwan and the 'One China' principle. In lieu of official diplomatic visits, senior personnel from the TAO make official visits to Taiwanese business people, students and teachers working and living on the Mainland.³⁴

Information. China attempts to influence Taiwanese media in various ways. It encourages pro-Mainland businesspeople to buy Taiwanese media outlets; it exerts pressure on Taiwanese media outlets which have investments – or plans to invest – in the Mainland; and it purchases advertorials embedded in Taiwanese media to erode press freedom in Taiwan and promote pro-China narratives.³⁵ These efforts have attracted attention in Taiwan, most notably in 2012-13 when part of the pro-democracy 'Next Media' Taiwanese print and television business was due to be sold to the heavily pro-Beijing Tsai Eng-meng and prompted widespread controversy.

China organises programmes and exchanges aimed at developing closer ties between Chinese and Taiwanese public and promoting a pan-Chinese identity, directed by the TAO. Often these efforts attract a self-selecting audience by inviting already pro-Beijing public figures or groups or fund events which are specifically pro-reunification.³⁶ Occasionally, however, Chinese public diplomacy efforts will be less overtly pro-reunification such as the 2017 'blessing tour' of the statue of Matsu (a Daoist/Chinese Buddhist Sea Goddess) which visited Matsu temples across Taiwan.³⁷



The Statue of Mazu and the Ship Heading to The Sea in Matsu, Taiwan.
IMAGE – SHUTTERSTOCK

³⁴ “国台办副主任龙明彪走访慰问赣闽两地台胞” (The Deputy Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, Long Mingyao visited the Taiwan compatriots), Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, accessed 24 April 2018. http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/newsb/201801/t20180126_11911298.htm

³⁵ Chien-Jung Hsu, “China’s Influence on Taiwan’s Media,” *Asian Survey* 54, no.3 (May/June 2014): 515-39.

³⁶ *State Council Taiwan Affairs Office of the People’s Republic of China*, “Cross Strait Interactions and Exchanges,” 2017, <http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/en/CrossstraitInteractionsandExchanges/>

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Military. Although not directly a measure of China's public diplomacy efforts, China's strong and growing military presence - combined with China's refusal to rule out the use of military force in achieving reunification if peaceful means do not work - provide a backdrop to China's public diplomacy efforts.

Economic/Financial. China has created a range of incentives and programmes aimed at bringing Taiwanese businesses and citizens to the Mainland to open up businesses and work. The goal is to increase ties to the Mainland and support for unification. For instance, China will sponsor multi-day economic workshops and expositions on the Mainland and invite neutral or pro-China Taiwanese people. Since the 2014 student protests against a proposed trade pact with China, Beijing started focusing particularly on Taiwanese youth. For example, there are currently 53 start-up 'incubators'³⁸ which offer free office space, subsidised housing, tax breaks and even financial grants for Taiwanese youth.³⁹

There have also been alleged financial links between the Mainland and the pro-China 'Chinese Unity Promotion' party via the Triad gangs; this is the focus of ongoing investigations in Taiwan.⁴⁰ In December 2017, prominent media personality Wang Ping-chung and three other New Party youth wing leaders were detained by Taiwan's Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau for questioning about possible links with Mainland China.

Legal. In March 2018, China implemented 31 legal measures to make it easier for Taiwanese public to study, work and invest in the Mainland.⁴¹ Of these measures, 12 give equal footing to Taiwanese and Chinese investors while 19 measures make it easier for Taiwanese people to study, set up businesses and work in China. Examples include making Taiwanese people eligible for various grants such as the National Outstanding Young Scientists Fund or encouraging them to participate in the national "Made in China 2025" plan – a nationwide initiative to upgrade China's infrastructure.⁴²

³⁸ Initiatives which provide work and meeting space, training and advice to new businesses.

³⁹ Brenda Goh and Jess Macy Yu, "China Using Economic Incentives to Charm Tech-savvy Taiwanese Youth and Entrepreneurs," *Japanese Times*, 9 February 2018, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/02/09/business/china-using-economic-incentives-charm-tech-savvy-taiwanese-youth-entrepreneurs/#.WrlZwK5saUk>

⁴⁰ Edward White, "Alarm in Taiwan over Triad Ties to Pro-China Groups," *Financial Times*, 13 October 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/b09de5d0-aa76-11e7-93c5-648314d2c72c>

⁴¹ "关于印发《关于促进两岸经济文化交流合作的若干措施》的通知"(Announcement of Measures to Promote Cross-Strait Economic and Cultural Exchanges and Cooperation), Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC, 28 February 2018, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201802/t20180228_11928139.htm

⁴² Ibid.

NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS

Critical Functions

According to the 2017 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), Taiwan's Ministry of Defense has developed five strategic goals:

1. Deter and defend against any hostile military action.
2. Build a military force with high-tech and innovative capabilities.
3. Become self-reliant in defence by using the national economy to develop defence, and using defence to spur the economy.
4. Prepare for non-traditional security threats and to protect the public's wellbeing by using the armed forces to conduct disaster relief programmes, promote social stability and protect the nation's maritime rights.
5. Strengthen regional stability in recognition that that in an increasingly interconnected world, there is also a need for multi-lateral and regional approaches to security.⁴³

At its core, the 2017 QDR remains the same as previous editions, despite the opposition party now being in government. The main changes, however, reflect an uncertainty about the US's presence and commitment to the area and an emphasis on the need to obtain certain weapon systems for more effective defence.⁴⁴

Vulnerabilities

Political. Reliance on other countries for political support against potential Chinese assertiveness and political support for Taiwanese autonomy. Domestic support for reunification with the Mainland.

Military. Taiwan's military is far smaller than China's which has been growing considerably; Taiwan has 130,000 military personnel in combat units compared with China's 850,000 personnel (of which 190,000 are located in the Taiwan Strait area alone).⁴⁵ Taiwan relies heavily on the US for protection; the strategy which has been at the core of Taiwan defence doctrine for decades, is to have enough defensive power to resist a Chinese military attack for two weeks and wait for help from the United States and the international community.⁴⁶

Economic. Taiwan's economic reliance on China as its largest trading partner and China's economic superiority enables China to leverage influence with Taiwan and third party countries in a way that Taiwan is unable to compete with.⁴⁷

⁴³ "Quadrennial Defense Review," *Ministry of National Defense, Republic of China*, 2017, 30-2.

⁴⁴ Derek Grossman, Michael S. Chase and Logan Ma, "Taiwan's 2017 Quadrennial Defense Review in Context," *RAND Corporation*, 14 June 2017, <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/06/taiwans-2017-quadrennial-defense-review-in-context.html>

⁴⁵ "Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017," United States' Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2017, 93.

⁴⁶ Steven Lee Myers and Chris Horton, "Once Formidable, Taiwan's Military Now Overshadowed by China's," *The New York Times*, 4 November 2017.

⁴⁷ Josh Horowitz, "The Charts that Show how Trump's 'One China' Statements Could Jeopardize Taiwan's Economy," *Quartz*, 15 December 2016. <https://qz.com/861507/charted-taiwans-economy-is-more-dependent-on-china-than-ever-before-making-trumps-threats-dangerous/>

Social. Small, yet vocal, pro-Beijing and pro-reunification political parties and civil society groups. Social, familial and cultural ties between Taiwan and China.

Information. As democratic media cannot allow for censorship, Taiwan is vulnerable to outside financial and editorial influence on its media through sponsored content and encouragement of pro-China businesspeople to purchase Taiwanese media.

Threats

Political. Further reduction in international political support for, or ties with, Taiwan and normalisation of the 'One China' principle – which, although it was accepted by previous governments, is not accepted by the incumbent leadership.

Military. Abandonment by the United States would be a decisive factor in Taiwanese security. Although abandonment is highly unlikely, the 2017 Quadrennial Defense Review queried the level of US commitment to the Asia Pacific region. China has been improving its military by developing its naval, air and rocket forces as well as information, cyber, and electronic warfare capabilities.^{48,49} China refuses to rule out the use of force against Taiwan to retake the island, and included the retaking of Taiwan in the Chinese Communist Party centenary goals.

Economic. China's economic clout and Taiwan's relatively slow growth presents a threat as China increasingly focuses on the commercial and business interests of unification, or at least on encouraging closer ties with the Mainland. Moreover, foreign influence on Taiwan's political process presents a threat if the alleged financial links between the Mainland and the pro-China 'Chinese Unity Promotion' party prove true.⁵⁰

Social. Despite Chinese efforts to bring about pro-reunification views, this does not present a large threat at present due to the maturing Taiwanese sense of identity and democracy which Chinese efforts have been ineffective at countering.

Information. The Chinese strategy of encouraging pro-Mainland businesspeople to buy Taiwanese media outlets and purchasing advertorials embedded in Taiwanese media to try and shape public opinion presents a threat.⁵¹ Should these information-based strategies bear fruit, it would render the public more susceptible to pro-Mainland narratives and reverse the maturing sense of Taiwanese national identity.

Effects

Political. Internationally, the number of countries recognising Taiwan has decreased from 22 to 17 in recent years due to targeted Chinese efforts. China has successfully prevented Taiwan from being invited to international events such as the World Health Assembly, despite Taiwan attending for many years previously.⁵² The concept of 'One China' ruled over by Beijing, however, has not become fully normalised and the number of countries maintaining informal relations with Taiwan remains stable.

While there is support for "blue" political parties that are more sympathetic and accommodating to Mainland Chi-

⁴⁸ "Quadrennial Defense Review," *Ministry of National Defense, Republic of China*, 2017.

⁴⁹ Arthur Ding, "What Is the Likelihood of Cross-Strait Conflict?" interview by Eric Rowe, *The Diplomat*, 13 October 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/what-is-the-likelihood-of-cross-strait-conflict/>

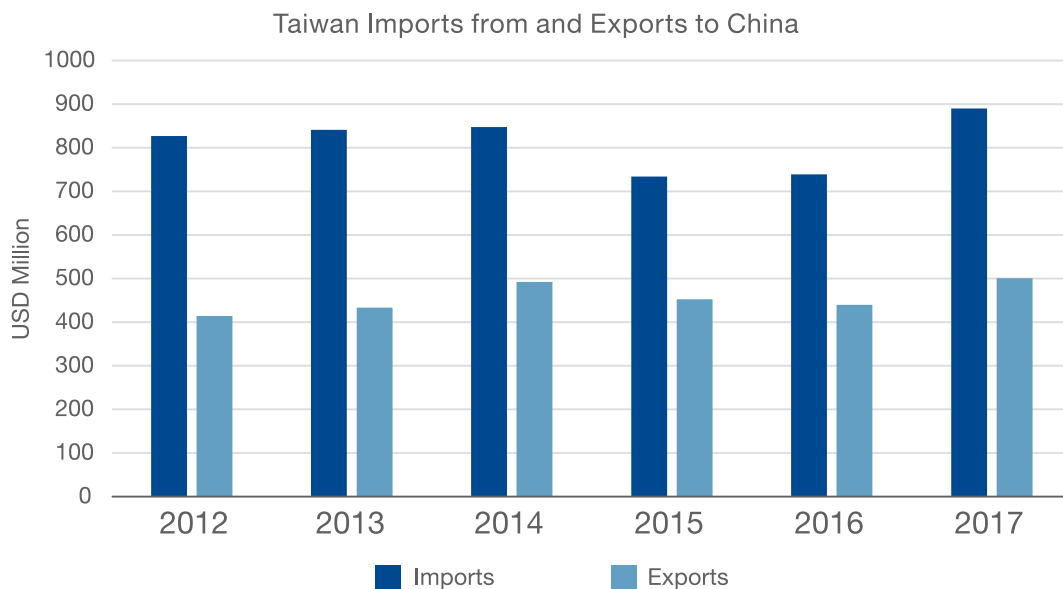
⁵⁰ Edward White, "Alarm in Taiwan over Triad Ties to Pro-China Groups," *Financial Times*, 13 October 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/b09de5d0-aa76-11e7-93c5-648314d2c72c>

⁵¹ Chien-Jung Hsu, "China's Influence on Taiwan's Media," *Asian Survey*, 11, no.3 (May/June 2014): 515-39.

⁵² Chris Horton, "Blocked by China, Taiwan Presses to Join U.N. Agency's Meeting," *The New York Times*, 8 May 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/08/world/asia/taiwan-world-health-china-.html>

na and declining approval ratings for Tsai Ing-wen, there is still significant anti-reunification sentiment amongst the public and even a proposal for an independence referendum being promoted by former Taiwanese leaders.⁵³

Economic. China has been effective at generating closer economic ties with Taiwan. Increasing public concern that the more conciliatory approach of President Ma Ying-jeou (2008-2016) was making the country too economically dependent on Beijing led to Ma's defeat and the election of the DPP's Tsai Ing-Wen in January 2016.⁵⁴



Social. Despite China's public diplomacy efforts to increase Taiwanese support for reunification, public opinion polls indicate a decline in the number of people holding pro-reunification views and an increase in the number of Taiwanese people who identify as 'Taiwanese' rather than 'Chinese' or 'Taiwanese and Chinese.'

This has been attributed to Taiwan's own maturation into a stable and more accountable democracy beginning in the 1990s, rising economic fortunes that made the case for open markets, growing disillusionment with Chinese political culture, and a generation gap in which younger Taiwanese do not have strong family and cultural ties to the Mainland. The hard-line rhetoric between the current leaders of Taiwan and China may also factor into this, although cause and effect in identity are hard to determine. At the same time, however, there are indications to suggest that the youth are more open and pragmatic in their views of China-Taiwan relations. For example, a survey by Taipei-based Global Views magazine found that almost 60 per cent of 20-29-year-olds are willing to work in the Mainland, suggesting that the growing sense of Taiwanese national identity does not necessarily preclude collaboration with the Mainland.⁵⁵

Information. Polls of Taiwanese public opinion on China, compiled by the Election Study Center at Taiwan's National Chengchi University, indicate, if anything, an increase in the number of people who want to maintain the status quo.⁵⁶ This suggests that the Chinese strategy of encouraging pro-Mainland businesspeople to buy Taiwanese media outlets and of purchasing advertorials embedded in Taiwanese media to try and shape public

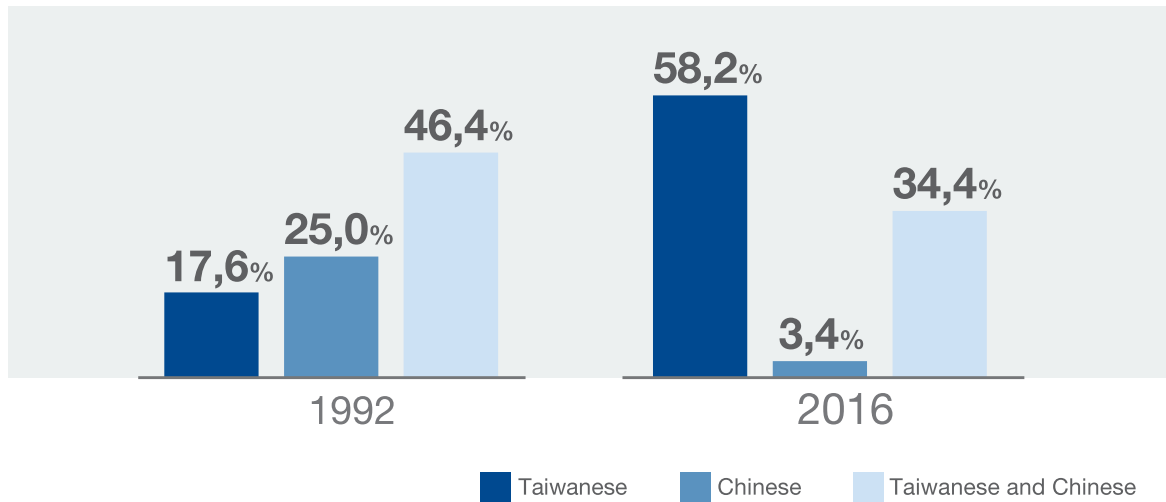
⁵³ Justine Crabtree, "Taiwan Launches Campaign for Independence Referendum, Local Media Reports," *CNBC*, 28 February 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/28/taiwan-launches-campaign-for-china-independence-referendum-local-media-reports.html>

⁵⁴ Richard Bush, "The United States Security Partnership with Taiwan," *The Brookings Institution*, 13 July 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-united-states-security-partnership-with-taiwan/>

⁵⁵ "Young Taiwanese Choose China Jobs over Politics," *Straits Times*, 20 August 2017, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/young-taiwanese-choose-china-jobs-over-politics>

⁵⁶ "Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland Trend Distribution in Taiwan," *Election Study Center, N.C.C.U.*, 15 January 2018, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=167>

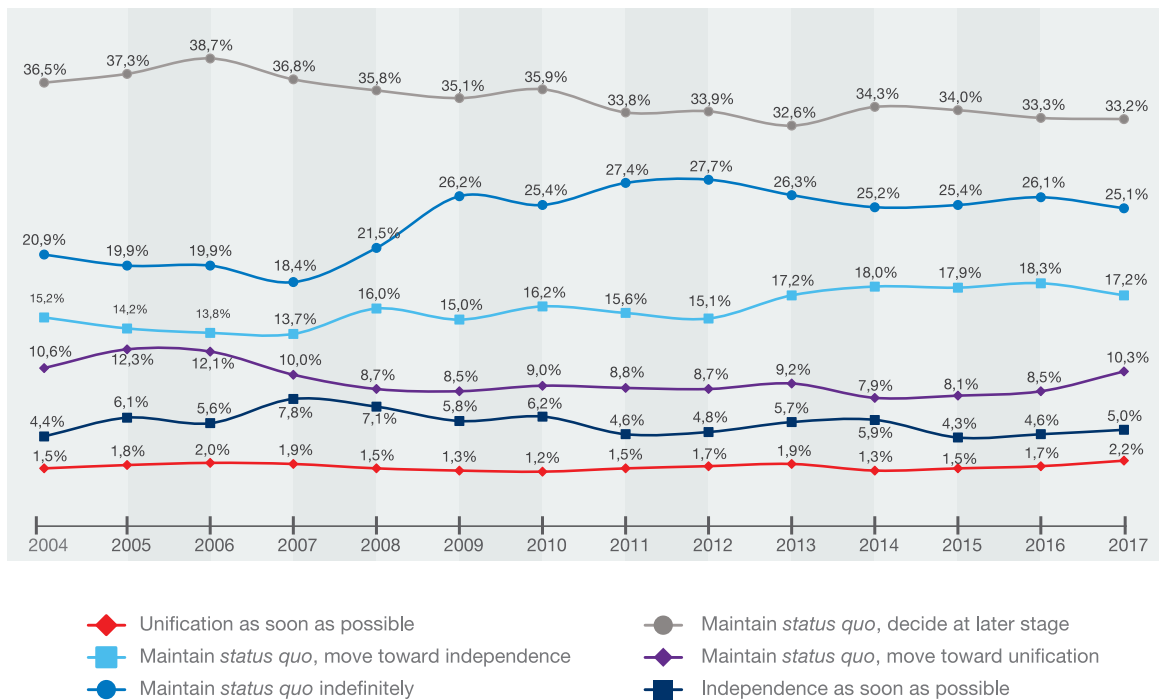
Opinion Poll: “Do you identify as Taiwanese, Chinese, or Taiwanese and Chinese?”



opinion has not yet borne fruit; however, this is a long-term strategy and is not easily measured.

Opinion polls conducted by Taiwan’s National Chengchi Center suggest little change in public opinion regarding unification with China; apart from some increase in support for maintaining the status quo indefinitely.⁵⁷

Changes in the Unification – Independence Stances of Taiwanese (Election Study Center, NCCU)



⁵⁷ “Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland Trend Distribution in Taiwan,” Election Study Center, N.C.C.U., 15 January 2018, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=167>

CONCLUSIONS

The principle of 'One China' has been ingrained as dogma central to Chinese identity and policy since the founding of the People's Republic of China. For over a decade, China has pursued this goal through economic incentives, traditional diplomacy and public diplomacy in both Taiwan directly and the international sphere more broadly. In Taiwan, although China has successfully used economic incentives and domestic policies to increase Taiwanese economic dependence on China and facilitate greater numbers of Taiwanese people working in the Mainland, Chinese public diplomacy has not brought about a more pro-unification society nor made Taiwanese people feel 'Chinese.' Despite efforts to target the youth, polls suggest they are even less supportive of unification than older generations, and more likely to embrace Taiwanese identity. The Taiwanese national identity and democratic principles have proven resilient in the face of Chinese efforts.

China has had more success in further isolating Taiwan in the international arena. Since the inauguration of the more pro-independence Tsai Ing-wen, China has successfully used economic incentives and diplomacy to target and convince allies of Taiwan to switch their diplomatic relations and recognise Beijing as the capital. China has also successfully blocked Taiwanese involvement in international conventions such as the World Health Assembly. Taiwan's lack of formal recognition in the United Nations and few formal diplomatic ties seriously constrain its ability to engage in effective diplomacy with the global community.

This must be seen in the wider context of an increasingly assertive and militarised China led by an ambitious and domestically very powerful Xi Jinping who has included Beijing's commitment to re-taking Taiwan in the nation's centenary goals. China also continues to refuse to rule of the use of force in retaking Taiwan if necessary. The likelihood of China moving the boundaries of justified intervention or using force outright to retake Taiwan is uncertain but it is possible. China is slowly reducing the options available to Taiwan in order to force it to the bargaining table or even to outright surrender.

Recommendations: Taiwan

Given these realities, Taiwan would be advised to take the following steps to combat China's public diplomacy strategy:

- **Promote national identity and culture at home.** In order to reinforce a sense of national cohesion that may blunt a rival's efforts to exploit ethnic similarities and weaken a sense of national uniqueness. The more Taiwanese people feel they are distinct from Beijing's understanding of what it means to be Chinese, the less effective Chinese public diplomacy efforts directly targeted at Taiwan will be.
- **Promote the national brand on the international stage.** Countries facing a rival power which seeks to exploit ethnic similarities – and ultimately to take control of instruments of power – should seek to promote their national brand on the international stage in order to generate public sympathy and support. In the case of Taiwan, the focus should be on disaster relief; health care; democracy; free

press, and pop culture. Public diplomacy and related efforts are especially effective when they draw inherent comparisons between a country and its rival.

- **Strengthen strategic alliances.** All countries are strengthened through strategic alliances, especially smaller countries threatened by larger, more powerful adversaries. In this case, China successfully leveraged its economic power to further reduce Taiwan's power and status on the diplomatic stage. Consequently, it is essential for Taiwan to do two things: (1) work hard to keep the alliances it has, especially with the United States and other Southeast Asian countries; and (2) cultivate stronger ties with international organisations and institutions, such as NGOs.

Recommendations: The United States, EU Countries, and other nations interested in containing China

The West generally can combat Chinese public diplomacy tactics regarding Taiwan by engaging them at their greatest strength – aid, development, and trade policy – and in continuing to promote an open, independent media and information environment that contrasts with the centralised, heavy-handed approach from Beijing. Specifically, the following steps are recommended:

- **Strengthen the military alliance and support for Taiwan.** The most recent Taiwanese Quadrennial Defence Review highlights the gulf between defence spending of China and Taiwan and this highlights the need to bolster military ties to Taiwan.
- **Mitigate international isolation of Taiwan.** This includes stemming the tide of countries cutting off formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, or, alternatively, ensuring Taiwan remains engaged with the international community in informal and other ways.
- **Do not cede development and aid funding to China.** China has closed the gap dramatically – and quickly – with the US and the West in terms of economic aid and trade, especially with the developing world. This has led to countries cutting ties with Taiwan in exchange for Chinese investment, and in many places in Latin America and Africa, fostered more positive feelings about China that it can leverage.
- **Strengthen support for Taiwanese cultural and educational exchanges and exhibitions.** The experts interviewed for this project all spoke of the “great story” Taiwan has to tell. Yet it is increasingly isolated from the international community. In addition, exchanges with the Mainland should be continued and expanded as they expose Chinese students to open societies and uncensored information.
- **Bolster economic, social, diplomatic, and military ties with countries in Asia and the region** as a way of countering China's efforts, such as its “Belt and Initiative.” Part of China's strategy toward Taiwan, after all, involves continuing to isolate it within the region, making unification a *fait accompli*.

