

Written Testimony

Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Stand with Taiwan: Countering the PRC's Political Warfare and Transnational Repression

Howard Shen

Assistant Fellow, Strategic Foresight Association (Taiwan)

Washington, DC

July 23, 2025

To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.

Thus, the highest art of war is to defeat the enemy's strategy; only after that comes undermining alliances, then attacking armies, and, as a last resort, laying siege to cities.

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

Chairman Sullivan, Co-Chairman Smith, distinguished members of the Commission, thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony. My purpose today is to bring to your attention the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) primary strategy to subjugate the free society of my country – the Republic of China (Taiwan) – without firing a single shot.

As Sun Tzu observed in *The Art of War*, “To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.” Beijing understands this profoundly. Rather than immediately resorting to military force, Beijing has long employed a multifaceted approach designed to erode Taiwan's strategic confidence and weaken its will to resist.

This is political warfare in its purest form, as defined by George F. Kennan in 1948: “the employment of all the means at a nation's command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives.”

The CCP's own doctrine, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) “Three Warfares” (*sanzhan*, 三戰), mirrors this logic:

- Public Opinion Warfare (*yulunzhan*, 輿論戰): Shapes domestic and international perceptions through propaganda and disinformation;
- Psychological Warfare (*xinlizhan*, 心理戰): Sows fear, confusion, and distrust through intimidation and coercive signaling, including gray-zone military activities;
- Legal Warfare (*faluzhan*, 法律戰) or “lawfare”: Exploits and manipulates legal regimes to advance political goals.

Beyond these, Beijing systematically deploys economic coercion, sophisticated disinformation campaigns, and persistent low-intensity gray-zone operations in and around Taiwan. These are not provocations of opportunity; they are strategic pressures calibrated to exhaust our society psychologically, politically, and economically. The goal is to push Taiwan into self-doubt and political paralysis before (or instead of) any kinetic attack.

Understanding this pervasive political warfare campaign is essential for designing effective, proportionate countermeasures. These countermeasures must strengthen Taiwan's democratic resilience without inadvertently fueling domestic political polarization or undermining the very freedoms we aim to protect. I appreciate the increasing attention this critical challenge has received here in Washington, D.C., and on Capitol Hill, and commend my fellow witnesses and the Commission staff for their tireless efforts.

Beijing's Political Warfare Toolkit

Economic Coercion

Beijing systematically weaponizes trade to exert political pressure on Taiwan. The aim is not to collapse Taiwan's economy overnight, but to target politically salient pain points that gradually erode public confidence. Its goal is to make ordinary citizens associate economic hardship with Taiwan's political choices, fostering disillusionment with democratic governance and normalizing the perception that accommodation leads to economic relief.

Taiwan's agricultural sector has been a primary target. Products heavily reliant on the mainland Chinese market, such as pineapples, wax apples, and grouper fish, have faced abrupt import bans under the specious "quarantine" concerns. These bans disproportionately impact farming communities in southern Taiwan, amplifying domestic frustration. Beijing deliberately weaponizes the desire for stability, making economic normalcy appear conditional on political submission.

Despite diversification efforts, Taiwan's trade structure underscores its continued vulnerability. According to Taiwan's Ministry of Finance, in the first half of 2025:¹

- Exports to mainland China and Hong Kong totaled \$79.2 billion (+12.7 percent YoY), accounting for 27.9 percent of Taiwan's total exports – the lowest share in 24 years but still Taiwan's largest single market alongside the United States.
- Imports from China and Hong Kong reached \$43.2 billion (+13.8 percent YoY), reflecting deep reliance on mainland supply chains.
- ICT and semiconductor-related products made up 70.8 percent of all exports, exposing Taiwan to significant risks if Beijing were to target critical supply chains.

Agricultural diversification has been even slower, with mainland China remaining the largest single buyer of Taiwan's plant products. Meanwhile, traditional industries like fisheries, textiles, petrochemicals, and labor-intensive manufacturing have faced sustained declines. This erosion of the industrial base indirectly undermines food security and manufacturing resilience, as these sectors are tightly linked to critical supply chains, including those for defense. A structurally weakened traditional industry base makes Taiwan more vulnerable to targeted trade disruptions and limits its capacity to absorb or quickly adapt to sudden embargoes or bans.

While short-term emergency measures, such as domestic solidarity campaigns to consume banned goods and international goodwill orders, may cushion immediate shocks, they cannot offset structural dependence. Taiwan must continue to expand trade diversification while maintaining stable economic ties with the mainland where feasible, but such stability must never

come at the cost of political leverage. Until Taiwan broadens its export markets, economic coercion will remain one of Beijing's most effective political warfare tools.

Disinformation and Cognitive Warfare

Beijing's disinformation campaigns are a cornerstone of its political warfare, designed to divide and demoralize. Content farms, LINE chatbots, and social media trolls amplify narratives such as "Taiwan's leaders will flee in wartime" and "Taiwan's military will not last over 72 hours."

The goal is not persuasion but erosion of trust, in government, in Taiwan's democratic processes, and in its partnerships. Even small doubts, when repeated and amplified, can depress voter turnout or deepen affective polarization.

In terms of electoral integrity, the CCP does not need to commit organized electoral fraud or ensure a proxy candidate wins. Beijing's objective is more insidious: to sow just enough doubt that even the most committed democrats question their institutions. If citizens lose confidence in the fairness of the process, cognitive warfare succeeds, not by changing votes, but by instilling an atmosphere of anxiety and chaos that weakens democratic resolve from within.

Neither apathy nor excessive mistrust is the answer. As Plato warned, "The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Civic participation is Taiwan's first line of defense against cognitive warfare, but it must be informed and grounded in trust, not driven by fear or conspiratorial suspicion. Beijing's malice thrives at both extremes: discouraging participation or turning politics into a hunt for "traitors." Countering it means not just fact-checking but sustaining public confidence that democratic processes work and that rational, constructive participation matters.

Gray-Zone Military Operations

Beijing's gray-zone operations are a continuous campaign, just short of war, designed to wear down Taiwan's will to resist while avoiding outright conflict. Daily PLA air incursions across the median line, maritime militia swarming near offshore islands, and drone overflights of Kinmen and Matsu have become normalized.

The objective is twofold: desensitizing the public by making PLA activity appear routine and unchangeable, and straining Taiwan's military resources through constant scrambling, which increases operational fatigue and the risk of accidents.

Taiwan is investing heavily in gray-zone defense capabilities. The Legislative Yuan swiftly approved the Ministry of National Defense-requested \$3.91 billion National Defense Resilience Budget, allocating funds for:

- \$1.91 billion for civil-military information and operations resilience, including new satellite and cloud systems to improve cybersecurity and protect undersea cables from sabotage;
- \$1.52 billion for improvement of key protective facilities;
- \$360 million for upgraded command, control, and communications systems; and
- \$15.6 million for integrated civil-military radar and imaging systems to improve monitoring of offshore incursions.

These initiatives directly target Beijing's gray-zone tactics, ensuring Taiwan can withstand cyber intrusions, maritime and aerial harassment, and more by protecting critical infrastructure, improving real-time situational awareness, and integrating civil-military responses.

Espionage and Infiltration: A National Threat

Recent espionage cases in this April have revealed the depth and sophistication of the CCP's infiltration efforts within Taiwan's government and military institutions.

One major case involves Huang Chu-Jung (黃取榮), a former senior ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) staffer, reportedly targeted by CCP Central Military Commission intelligence over a decade ago while studying in Guangzhou. Recruited as an agent, Huang built an organized network upon returning to Taiwan, exploiting his political connections to systematically penetrate sensitive offices.²

Prosecutors exposed a clear chain of recruitment and information flow:³

- Huang first recruited his close associate Chiu Shih-Yuan (邱世元), former deputy director of the ruling party's central party school
- Chiu then helped recruit Wu Shang-Yu (吳尚雨), a key aide to then Vice President Lai Ching-Te. After Lai assumed the presidency, Wu became a presidential adviser and continued passing classified travel schedules and diplomatic information to Chiu, who forwarded them to Huang.
- Chiu also recruited Ho Jen-Chieh (何仁傑), a longtime aide to Foreign Minister Joseph Wu, who provided sensitive foreign ministry intelligence.
- Huang then personally transported the collected information to CCP intelligence officers in the mainland, using a specially designed, CCP-developed encrypted application to communicate with handlers and transmit additional classified materials.

Leaked materials reportedly included then Vice President Lai Ching-Te's full travel schedule and hotel information during his 2023 trip to Paraguay, and Vice President Hsiao Bi-Khim's contact information such as but not limited to personal phone number and contact lists,

posing significant security risks. Prosecutors have announced indictments for Huang and his network under Taiwan's *National Security Act*.

These revelations underscore real-world risks. Vice President Hsiao has already been subjected to harassment and surveillance abroad by pro-CCP groups during overseas visits, including in the Czech Republic in March 2024 as VP-elect. A Czech Military Intelligence spokesman told *Reuters* in June 2025:⁴

This consisted of physically following the Vice President, gathering information on her schedule and attempts to document her meetings with important representatives of the Czech political and public scene... We even recorded an attempt by the Chinese civil secret service to create conditions to perform a demonstrative kinetic action against a protected person, which however did not go beyond the phase of preparation.

While there is no direct evidence linking that incident to the current espionage cases, it illustrates how leaked personal data could be exploited to aid intimidation or physical targeting.

A second case highlights vulnerabilities within the Legislative Yuan. Sheng Chu-Ying (盛礎纓), a long-time legislative assistant who worked for multiple DPP lawmakers and most recently for former Legislative Yuan Speaker You Si-Kun, was accused of being recruited as a CCP agent in 2019. Investigators allege that Sheng provided sensitive legislative information over a six-year period in exchange for cash and cryptocurrency.

The investigation into Ho Jen-Chieh further exposed serious institutional weaknesses. Ho, who arranged travel for senior officials, passed an initial security clearance in 2016 but was never re-evaluated in the subsequent eight years. His 2020 marriage to a military police officer stationed at the Presidential Office, who has since been reassigned, underscores the need for continuous vetting and insider-risk assessments for personnel in sensitive positions.

The military has not been immune. Kung Fan-Chia (孔繁嘉), a former lieutenant colonel and deputy director at the Military News Agency, was convicted of espionage for passing sensitive military information to CCP intelligence units. He was sentenced to just over five years, a sentence one legislator noted was lighter than that for selling a "murder house." Such lenient sentencing for those who betray state secrets not only undermines deterrence but risks eroding public and international confidence in Taiwan's national security system.

These cases demonstrate a simple truth: for the CCP, infiltration targets are chosen based on utility, not political affiliation. As Peter Mattis and Cheryl Yu of the Jamestown Foundation observe: Green (DPP) spies are just as useful as blue (Kuomintang; KMT) spies as long as they serve the same goal of national reunification.⁵

This underscores two critical points.

1. The CCP's political warfare does not distinguish between parties; it targets Taiwan as a whole. Framing the threat in partisan terms only plays into Beijing's hands by distracting from its true objective: to erode trust in all political institutions and delegitimize democracy itself.
2. A hardline stance on cross-Strait policy does not automatically translate into sound national security practices. One can adopt the toughest rhetoric toward Beijing yet still be careless in basic counterintelligence measures, as these recent espionage cases illustrate. True national security depends not on partisan signaling but on professional, institution-wide safeguards that protect Taiwan's democratic system from infiltration.

Whole-of-Society Resilience Means the Whole Society

To strengthen Taiwan's democratic institutions and counter the CCP's political warfare, Taiwan's leaders frequently emphasize "whole-of-society resilience." This means engaging key voices from all walks of life to prepare citizens for various security and disaster risks and foster broad social consensus.⁶ Crucially, whole-of-society resilience must truly mean the whole society.

Beijing's strategy deliberately seeks to polarize Taiwan's democracy – pitting groups against one another, amplifying mistrust, and eroding faith in public institutions. Over-politicizing the CCP threat, labeling domestic political rivals as "pro-Communist" or reducing all policy debate to partisan tests, plays directly into Beijing's hands. It risks exhausting and paralyzing concerned citizens, precisely the psychological effect Beijing intends to create.

As commentator Angelica Oung has argued, Taiwan cannot afford to view every issue through "green goggles"⁷ or any partisan lens. Political leaders and opinion-shapers who truly love Taiwan must approach national security, cross-Strait relations, and economic policy holistically, with the best interests of society as a whole in mind. Beijing's political warfare thrives on division, and any approach that prioritizes partisan gain over societal resilience risks doing its work for it.

Strengthening Taiwan's resilience requires reinforcing public trust across party lines. Civic education, media literacy, and institutional transparency are essential, but so is active and responsible legislative oversight of its national security apparatus. Constructive scrutiny, when carried out professionally and without partisan weaponization, can expose vulnerabilities and strengthen public confidence, showing that democratic accountability and resilience are not mutually exclusive.

Taiwan's democratic pluralism and cross-party cooperation are not weaknesses; they are its greatest strengths against authoritarian political warfare. Whole-of-society resilience truly means the whole society – whether green or blue. Any approach that fractures Taiwan's already fragile social fabric for partisan gain undermines national security far more than it protects it.

Responsible, Disciplined Engagement

While the national interests of the United States and Taiwan overlap in many areas, they are not identical. Instead of assuming external assistance will be automatic or unconditional, it is critically important that Taiwan pursues a balanced strategy: strengthening defense and international partnerships while responsibly exploring avenues, including maintaining disciplined channels of communication, to reduce miscalculation and secure cross-Strait stability.

Some in the United States may view dialogue with deep suspicion, which is understandable for a country that is far stronger, more resilient, and geographically distant from mainland China. Taiwan does not have that luxury.

For Taiwan, responsible engagement is not about naïveté or appeasement; it is about buying time, managing risks, and ensuring that its people can live in security and freedom despite constant pressure as Taiwan strengthens its resilience and defense preparedness. The United States should welcome such efforts, provided such engagements are pursued with eyes wide open and grounded in a full understanding of the depth of the Communists' political warfare operations.

Efforts by Taiwanese political figures to keep channels open should not be discredited offhand, so long as they are consistent with Taiwan's security and democratic values. This is especially true given that maintaining dialogue has long been regarded across Taiwan's political spectrum as a necessary risk-management tool, even if some initiatives have not received a response from Beijing. American, European, and Southeast Asian leaders consistently seek to engage Beijing and keep channels of communication open. Taiwan should not be held to a different standard.

If, however, there are reasons beyond reasonable doubt to believe that anyone has acted as a proxy of the CCP, Taiwanese prosecutors should investigate and prosecute such cases to the full extent of the law, just as they have in the recent espionage cases within the government and military. Anyone who betrays their own country should pay the price. Responsible engagement must be based on transparency and accountability.

This is why strategic discipline from Taiwan's political leaders is essential. Beijing is quick to exploit unforced errors. For instance, former KMT President Ma Ying-jeou's remarks on the eve of the 2024 presidential election, urging Taiwanese to "believe in the goodwill" of Xi Jinping, were ill-timed and risked signaling weakness during a politically sensitive moment. Beijing's state media amplified these comments, wrongfully portraying them as evidence that somehow strong pro-CCP elements still exist in Taiwan, thereby undermining deterrence.

Similarly, KMT Legislator Fu Kun-Chi's cross-Strait trip to Beijing in April 2024 included a high-profile meeting with Wang Huning (王滄寧), the lead implementer of the CCP's

United Front Work. Although Fu framed the visit as focusing on tourism and agricultural trade, including celebrations of partially lifted bans on cross-Strait tourism, his delegation was ill-timed, politically careless and handed Beijing easy propaganda victories, reinforcing false narratives and potentially undercutting Taiwan's deterrence.

These actions were politically shortsighted. These missteps provided easy material for CCP United Front propaganda and undermined American and international confidence in Taiwan's resolve and, over time, weaken public confidence at home. Responsible engagement requires careful messaging, timing, and coordination; anything less risks feeding into Beijing's cognitive warfare and undermining our domestic unity, deterrence posture, and social cohesion.

Policy Recommendations

Taiwan faces a sustained political warfare campaign aimed at undermining its democracy, weakening its deterrence, and eroding its economic stability without firing a shot. While Taiwan has taken important steps, its efforts need sustained and integrated supported from the United States. Standing with Taiwan, the United States should consider:

- **Deepen intelligence and counterintelligence cooperation:** Recent espionage cases reveal institutional vulnerabilities in Taiwan's security apparatus. Expanded training, technology sharing, and vetting mechanisms can help close these gaps, strengthening deterrence and international confidence.
- **Align economic statecraft with security objectives:** Washington should work with partners to strengthen Taiwan's trade diversification and reduce structural dependence on any single market, particularly in politically sensitive sectors.
- **Bolster gray-zone defense and infrastructure resilience:** Washington and Taipei should expand cooperation in cyber defense, radar systems, undersea cable protection, and satellite-based communication to enhance Taiwan's ability to withstand Beijing's daily coercion and wartime sabotage activities.
- **Expand Whole-of-Society Cooperation:** Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues should be expanded to involve Taiwan's national opposition parties, local governments, civil society, and critical private industry, strengthening Taiwan's whole-of-society resilience to political warfare.
- **Combat Cognitive Warfare:** Stronger U.S. broadcasting international presence such as Radio Free Asia and Voice of America provides reliable, fact-based information directly to Chinese-speaking audiences.

The surest way to deny Beijing victory is to ensure Taiwan remains united, capable, and confident. With U.S. support aligned across security, economic, and informational domains, Taiwan can continue to strengthen its deterrence and prove that democracies, when prepared and disciplined, are far harder to subdue than any authoritarian power anticipates.

¹ Ministry of Finance, Republic of China (Taiwan), Preliminary Customs Statistics on Import and Export Trade for June 2025 [114 年 6 月海關進出口貿易初步統計], July 8, 2025,

[https://service.mof.gov.tw/public/Data/statistic/trade/news/11406/11406_%E4%B8%AD%E6%96%87%E6%96%B0%E8%81%9E%E7%A8%BF\(%E6%9C%AC%E6%96%87%E5%8F%8A%E9%99%84%E8%A1%A8\).pdf](https://service.mof.gov.tw/public/Data/statistic/trade/news/11406/11406_%E4%B8%AD%E6%96%87%E6%96%B0%E8%81%9E%E7%A8%BF(%E6%9C%AC%E6%96%87%E5%8F%8A%E9%99%84%E8%A1%A8).pdf).

² “黃取榮當共諜 22 年領取報酬逾 600 萬還涉洗錢 [Huang Chu-Jung Acted as a CCP Spy for 22 Years, [Received Over NT\$6 Million, Also Involved in Money Laundering],” *United Daily News* (聯合報), June 11, 2025, <https://udn.com/news/story/124449/8798487>.

³ “共諜 APP 揭密 1 / 賴清德訪友邦陷險境 行程、房號全被中南海掌握 [Spy-Enabled App Reveals All: Lai Ching-Te’s Itinerary, Room Number Fully Controlled by Zhongnanhai],” *Mirror Media* (鏡傳媒), May 31, 2025, <https://www.mirrormedia.mg/story/20250531inv003>.

⁴ Jan Pejsek, quoted in “Czechs Say China Followed, Planned Intimidation of Taiwan Vice President,” *Reuters*, June 28, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/czechs-say-china-followed-planned-intimidation-taiwan-vice-president-2025-06-27/>.

⁵ Peter Mattis and Cheryl Yu, “The Real Enemy of Blue, Green, and White Is Not Each Other, but the CCP [觀點投書：藍綠白的敵人不是彼此，是中共],” *Storm Media* (風傳媒), April 11, 2025, <https://www.storm.mg/article/5353486>.

⁶ “Whole-of-Society Resilience Committee [全社會韌性委員會],” Presidential Office, Republic of China (Taiwan) (中華民國總統府), <https://www.president.gov.tw/Page/728>; “與谷立言同台 朱立倫：提高國防預算是全世界共同要求 [Sharing Stage with Raymond Greene, Eric Chu: Increasing Defense Budget Is a Global Consensus],” *United Daily News* (聯合報), May 24, 2025, <https://udn.com/news/story/6656/8761825>.

⁷ Angelica Oung, “It’s Time to Take Off the Green Goggles,” *Taipology*, May 24, 2024, <https://taipology.substack.com/p/its-time-to-take-off-the-green-goggles>.