

# The China–Taiwan Weekly Update



**Authors:** Nils Peterson, Matthew Sperzel, and Daniel Shats of the Institute for the Study of War

**Editors:** [Dan Blumenthal](#) and [Frederick W. Kagan](#) of the American Enterprise Institute

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*The China–Taiwan Weekly Update is a joint product from the Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute. The update supports the ISW–AEI Coalition Defense of Taiwan project, which assesses Chinese campaigns against Taiwan, examines alternative strategies for the United States and its allies to deter the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) aggression, and—if necessary—defeat the People’s Liberation Army (PLA). The update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and cross–Taiwan Strait developments.*

## **Key Takeaways**

- **Taiwan’s opposition-led Legislative Yuan passed legislative reforms to strengthen the legislature’s oversight powers over the government.**
- **At least 45 Taiwanese musicians, actors, and other celebrities shared a post by PRC state media CCTV on the social media platform Weibo in support of “reunification.”**
- **The CCP rejected opportunities that the ROC government has offered to restart cross-strait exchanges and cool down tensions.**
- **The PRC Ministry of Defense and state media selectively publicized comments from the UN Secretary-General’s spokesperson to bolster its stance that Taiwan is a part of the PRC under international law.**
- **A PRC delegation led by Minister of National Defense Dong Jun attended the Shangri-La Dialogue.**

Cross-Strait

Relations

## *Taiwan*

**Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan (LY) passed legislative reforms to strengthen the legislature’s oversight powers over the government.** The bill that the Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) proposed included amendments to the Law Governing the Legislature’s Power. The reforms

permit the LY to call on any public official to testify before an investigative committee and confirm political appointments. They also mandate that the president give an annual national address on the state of the nation followed by a question-and-answer session with legislators. The reforms impose fines of up to NT\$200,000 (\$6,206) for “contempt of legislature.” The LY can impose these fines on anyone who fails to appear at a legislative hearing, refuses to answer questions, asks questions back to legislators, fails to provide requested documents, or lies.[1] The LY also passed an amendment to Taiwan’s Criminal Code to make lying to the LY a criminal offense punishable by a fine of up to NT\$200,000 (\$6,206) and up to one year in prison.[2] The new reforms that strengthen the legislature’s oversight powers will increase the KMT and TPP opposition’s ability to check, investigate, and hinder the agenda and operation of President Lai’s DPP administration. The KMT and TPP together hold a majority of seats in the LY.

The LY approved the bill amid large-scale protests. Around 70,000 protesters in Taipei and thousands more in other cities gathered to protest the legislative reforms on May 28. A crowd of 100,000 previously gathered around the LY during the bill’s second readings on May 24. Some of the protesters used slogans such as “I am in contempt of legislature” and “no discussion, no democracy” to signal their opposition to the contents of the reforms and their view that there was not enough discussion before the vote.[3] A Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation poll found that 57.5% of Taiwanese respondents supported criminalizing “contempt of legislature,” however.[4]

The LY will send the bill to the Executive Yuan (EY) and ultimately the president to sign the bill into law. The EY has ten days to pass the bill or to send it back to the LY for reconsideration with approval from the president. “Reconsideration” means that the LY will vote on the bill again or revise it. If a majority of the LY votes to pass the bill unchanged at this second review, the president and EY must sign it into law.[5]

**EY President (Premier) Cho Jung-tai said he may ask the LY to conduct a second review of the bill, which would likely delay but not stop the bill's passage to law.** Cho expressed concern that the bill does not clearly define “contempt of legislature” and could be used to unreasonably persecute officials the LY summons or even prevent them from fully clarifying policies. Cho also said the provisions allowing the LY to confirm political appointments and summon the president to address the LY could lead to excessive LY interference in executive power.[6] The KMT-TPP coalition in the LY has the majority needed to pass the bill again if required to do a second review, however.

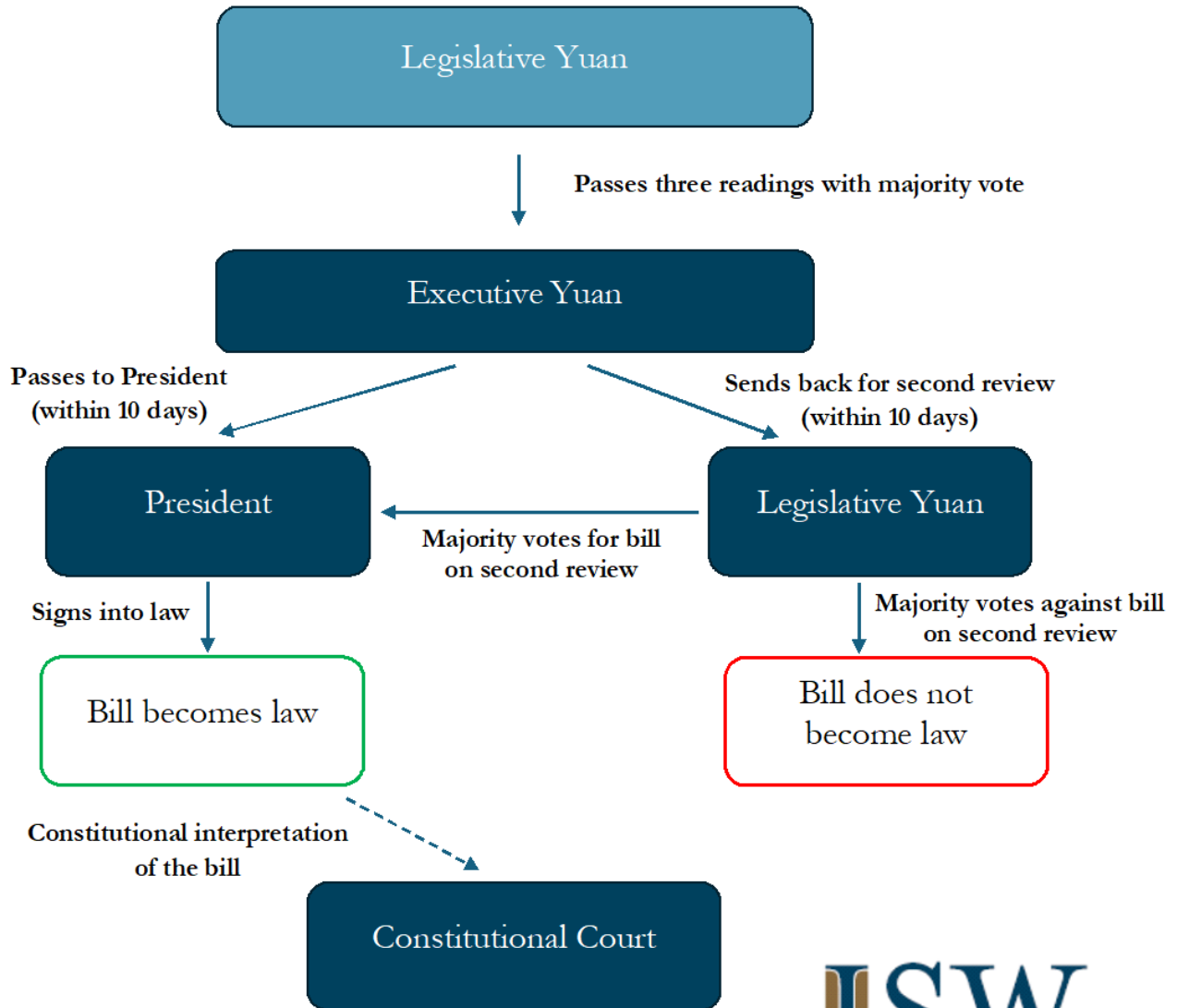
**The DPP is considering a constitutional challenge to the reforms, which could block the bill.** DPP legislative caucus whip Ker Chien-ming said on May 27 that the DPP would request a constitutional interpretation of both the content of the reforms and the procedures through which they advanced. Ker and other DPP politicians argued that the new reforms give the LY an unconstitutional amount of power over the government. They also argued that the KMT and TPP forced their reforms through without allowing sufficient discussion or transparency about the content of the bill.[7] A constitutional review that results in Taiwan’s Constitutional Court finding the reforms unconstitutional

is likely the DPP's last hope to stop the reforms from passing into law, since an EY-mandated "reconsideration" would still allow the KMT and TPP to pass it again with a simple majority. President Lai Ching-te said he supports both the EY's recommendation to send the bill back for a second review and the DPP caucus's request for a constitutional review.<sup>[8]</sup>

The KMT and TPP countered that the reforms will strengthen Taiwan's democracy. KMT Chair Eric Chu said the bill's passage was a "milestone" for Taiwan's democracy and would give full play to the legislature's constitutional role in imposing checks and balances on the government, in line with the public's expectations.<sup>[9]</sup> KMT legislative caucus whip Fu Kun-chi said the KMT and TPP will form a joint investigative team to use the LY's new investigative powers to crack down on corruption.<sup>[10]</sup> TPP Chair Ko Wen-je said the new reforms would strengthen Taiwan's democracy and that he "never imagined" the DPP would try to block them, as the DPP had supported some similar reforms when it was in the opposition.<sup>[11]</sup> Ko said he opposed Fu Kun-chi's proposal for a joint KMT–TPP anti-corruption investigative team, however.<sup>[12]</sup> The TPP holds a decisive 8 seats in the LY, which were essential to passing these reforms. No party holds a majority of seats.

The following chart shows the legal process for passing or stopping a bill in Taiwan after the bill has passed its third reading in the LY.

## Post-Legislature Bill Approval Process in Taiwan



Source: Taiwan Central News Agency



**At least 45 Taiwanese musicians, actors, and other celebrities shared a post by PRC state media CCTV on the social media platform Weibo in support of “reunification.”** The post from May 22, two days after Taiwan President Lai Ching-te’s inauguration, read: “Taiwan has never been a country and will never be a country. ‘Taiwan independence’ is a dead end and the motherland’s reunification cannot be resisted. China will eventually achieve complete reunification.”<sup>[13]</sup> Some of the

celebrities added their own pro-reunification slogans or reposted a post from the official CCP newspaper *People's Daily* with a similar message. CCTV highlighted these reposts on its account on May 25.<sup>[14]</sup>

The ROC Ministry of Culture said these Taiwanese artists “had no choice” because the PRC was pressuring them to publicly express a political stance in favor of Taiwan “returning” to China. Many of the Taiwanese artists make their living performing in the PRC or have large PRC fanbases.<sup>[15]</sup> The PRC Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) spokesperson claimed on May 29 that nearly 100 Taiwanese celebrities shared the CCTV post and that these reposts were “natural expressions of true feelings.” The spokesperson accused President Lai and the DPP of deliberately creating cross-strait tensions by claiming that the celebrities were “forced” to share the posts.<sup>[16]</sup>

The PRC has previously pressured Taiwanese celebrities to make statements favorable to the CCP’s political stance on Taiwan. The agent of Taiwanese actress Wu Mu-hsuen told Taiwanese media in early May that the film crew on a PRC drama Wu had finished filming told her she must sign an agreement that “Taiwan is part of China” or the show would not be aired. Wu signed the agreement and the show aired in 2023. The agent said forcing Taiwanese actors working in the PRC to sign such agreements has become common practice. The agent said PRC officials review the identity and political commitments of Taiwanese artists before allowing them to perform in the PRC.<sup>[17]</sup> Reuters reported on December 28, 2023, that the PRC’s National Radio and Television Administration pressured the Taiwanese band Mayday to publicly support the PRC stance on Taiwan. The TAO denied the allegation.<sup>[18]</sup> The case of Mayday in December and the large number of celebrities sharing Weibo posts on May 22 occurred at politically sensitive times. The first was right before Taiwan’s January 2024 election and the second was right after Lai Ching-te’s inauguration as Taiwan’s president.

Recent polls show that the CCP’s stance is not popular in Taiwan. A Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation (TPOF) poll found that 74.3% of Taiwanese respondents agreed with President Lai Ching-te’s statement that “the ROC and PRC are not subordinate to one another.” 47.2% supported “Taiwan independence” compared to only 12.4% who supported reunification and 28.5% who supported the “status quo.”<sup>[19]</sup>

**The CCP rejected opportunities that the ROC government has offered to restart cross-strait exchanges and cool down tensions.** President Lai Ching-te said in his inauguration speech on May 20 that the PRC should cooperate with Taiwan to resume cross-strait tourism based on reciprocity and allow PRC university students to study in Taiwan. Lai said on May 27 that he hoped to promote mutual understanding, reconciliation, and forgiveness through cross-strait exchanges and cooperation.<sup>[20]</sup> Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) issued a statement on May 24 calling for the PRC to resume allowing its degree students to study at Taiwanese universities.<sup>[21]</sup> ROC Transport Minister Li Men-yen said on May 24 that the Ministry of Transportation would discuss resuming cross-strait group tourism on a reciprocal basis.<sup>[22]</sup> The PRC has rejected these overtures, however. TAO

Spokesperson Zhu Fenglian claimed that Lai's calls for cross-strait dialogue and exchange lack sincerity.[23] Zhu responded to Lai's call for understanding, reconciliation, and forgiveness on May 29 by saying that Lai must immediately abandon his "Taiwan independence" stance, cease "separatist provocations," and return to the 1992 Consensus.[24] The 1992 Consensus is an alleged verbal agreement between semi-official representatives of the PRC and the then KMT-ruled ROC following negotiations in 1992. It states that both sides agree there is only one China, and that Taiwan is part of China. The CCP interprets this "one China" to be the People's Republic of China, while the KMT interprets it to be the Republic of China.

The PRC Ministry of Education suspended all programs that sent PRC students to study in Taiwan in 2020, citing the COVID-19 pandemic and bad cross-strait relations.[25] The PRC and ROC both halted group tourism during the pandemic.[26] Taiwan's Tourism Administration initially planned to resume Taiwanese group tours to the PRC on March 1 but canceled this policy in February after the PRC unilaterally adjusted a flight route in the Taiwan Strait to fly closer to Taiwan.[27]

**The ROC Kinmen Defense Command said a PRC civilian drone that dropped pro-unification fliers on an ROC military base on Erdan Island was a "cognitive warfare trick."** A drone dropped a box containing pro-unification fliers on a pier of an ROC military base on the island of Erdan. The fliers said both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to "one China," and urged the readers not to use force to resist unification or sacrifice their lives for "Taiwan independence." Erdan is a small island with a military garrison that is part of Taiwan's Kinmen County, a series of islands located a few miles from the mainland of the PRC. A PRC netizen posted a video of himself on YouTube packaging the fliers into a box and using an aerial drone to drop them on Erdan from the PRC.[28] The Kinmen Defense Command said the flier drop from a drone "beyond visual range" was a "typical cognitive warfare trick" with the intent to attract attention, stir debate, and increase social media traffic.[29]

PRC civilian drones have flown over and filmed ROC facilities on Erdan and other nearby islands on previous occasions including on March 30 and April 8. ROC Army Chief of Staff Chen Chien-yi said on April 3 that such drones constituted "gray zone intrusions" and "cognitive operations" by the PRC to undermine Taiwanese and international confidence in Taiwan's military. Chen at the time dismissed the possibility that "mainland civilian bloggers trying to gain popularity on the Internet" were responsible for the drone incursions.[30]

**The PRC expressed firm opposition to US Congressional delegations that visited Taiwan after President Lai Ching-te's inauguration.** A US House of Representative delegation led by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Michael McCaul arrived in Taiwan on May 26 for a week of talks on US-Taiwan relations with the new administration. A US Senate delegation led by Senator Tammy Duckworth arrived in Taiwan on May 29 for a two-day visit. Both groups met President Lai and

other government officials.[31] McCaul said Congress would work to speed up US weapons shipments to Taiwan.[32] Duckworth said she and other senators would introduce a bill to require US sanctions on the PRC if it invades Taiwan.[33] These were the first two delegations of US officials to Taiwan since President Lai's inauguration on May 20. No sitting US officials attended the inauguration itself. A PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesperson said on May 27 that the PRC strongly opposed McCaul's delegation's visit and made "serious protests" to the United States. She said the Congresspeople who visited Taiwan violated the one-China principle and the US government's commitment to maintain only unofficial relations with Taiwan and sent a "severely wrong signal" to "Taiwan independence forces." [34]

### *China*

**The PRC Ministry of Defense and state media selectively publicized comments from the UN Secretary-General's spokesperson to bolster its stance that Taiwan is a part of the PRC under international law.** Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric said at a press briefing on May 23 that "on the issue of China, [the UN is] guided by the General Assembly resolution of 1971." He clarified in response to a journalist's question that the UN Resolution in question is relevant "in terms of our standing on Taiwan as a province of China" but denied that this means that "China can take over Taiwan anytime." Dujarric responded to the PRC's military exercises around Taiwan on May 23 by urging "relevant parties to refrain from acts that could escalate tensions in the region." [35] UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 admitted the PRC as the sole representative of "China" and expelled the ROC from this seat in 1971. The resolution did not mention Taiwan. PRC state media Xinhua and other state media outlets reported that Dujarric had reiterated the UN stance that Taiwan is a province of China but did not report any further context of his comments, including his call to avoid escalation in the region and his rejection of the stance that "China can take over Taiwan anytime." [36] Ministry of National Defense (MOD) spokesperson Col. Wu Qian cited Dujarric's comment along with UN Resolution 2758 on May 30 to refute Lai Ching-te's line in his inaugural speech that the ROC and PRC are "not subordinate to each other." [37] The PRC has repeatedly argued that UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 is equivalent to an international legal consensus that Taiwan is part of the PRC. [38]

Broader international acceptance of PRC arguments that Taiwan is part of the PRC under international law would serve to further undermine Taiwan's sovereignty. It would hamper Taiwan's international participation, lend legitimacy to PRC coercive actions against Taiwan as a "domestic issue," and lend credence to PRC arguments that the United States and other countries' engagement with Taiwan without PRC consent is illegal.

**A PRC delegation led by Minister of National Defense Dong Jun attended the Shangri-La Dialogue.** The Shangri-La Dialogue is a defense summit that the International Institute for Strategic Studies organizes and holds annually in Singapore. This year's conference will take place from May 31 – June 2. [39] Minister of National Defense Dong Jun will represent the PRC and deliver a speech on

the PRC's Global Security Outlook and meet with foreign counterparts, including United States Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.[40]

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s keynote speech on May 31 called out “illegal, coercive, aggressive, and deceptive actions” that violate the Philippines’ sovereignty, and vowed to defend the Philippines’ sovereignty “to the last square inch.” PLA Major General Xu Hui publicly responded to Marcos’ speech during the Q&A session. Xu emphasized the importance for Southeast Asian states to maintain a policy of centrality and suggested that the Philippines’ behavior was a threat to regional peace.[41]

The CCP is also signaling its intent to stabilize relations with the United States by agreeing to resume communication between PLA and US theater commanders. This agreement is the latest in a trend since November 2023, when Biden and Xi agreed at their San Francisco summit to restore bilateral military meetings. The PLA has participated in the required meetings since that agreement. The PLA participated in the US–China Defense Policy Coordination talks in early January.[42] The PLA then participated in the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement in early April. [43] The US Department of Defense announced that Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin reaffirmed with Dong that the two sides’ respective theater commanders would resume communication by phone “in the coming months.” The PRC frames the core of the “San Francisco Vision” as stabilizing PRC–US relations while engaging in governmental exchange groups and consultations on regional hotspots.[44] The PRC has continued to drive regional tensions in the South China Sea and Taiwan since this summit.

The United States views military-to-military talks as a means of escalation management to prevent and control crises. The CCP views these talks, at least in part, as a bargaining chip that it can use to influence US behavior to the party’s benefit, however. A US action that the CCP deems unfavorable would be grounds to cut off military-to-military dialogue, in the party’s view. The party previously did this by cutting off high-level military dialogue in the aftermath of then-Speaker Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in August 2022.[45] This precedent indicates the possibility that the CCP will continue to use military-to-military dialogue opportunities to shape United States behavior.

Northeast

Asia

### *Japan and South Korea*

**PRC Premier Li Qiang focused on reducing trade barriers during a trilateral summit with leaders from Japan and South Korea on May 27.** The summit, which included Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, was the first trilateral meeting in four years. Li maintained a distinct focus on economic matters and proposed deepening trade connectivity to maintain stability in supply chains.[46] Li also proposed strengthening scientific and technological cooperation and resuming negotiations on a three-way free trade agreement. Li’s



representation at the summit instead of Xi Jinping reinforces the PRC's emphasis on trade over security, as the premier is traditionally responsible for overseeing economic affairs.

Li advocated for upholding “strategic autonomy,” promoting multipolarity, and opposing “camp politics” during a joint press conference after the summit, referencing Japan and South Korea's cooperation with the US.[47] Li expressed his opposition to “turning economic matters into political games and security issues,” rejecting protectionism, and preventing the decoupling of supply chains.[48] The PRC views the alignment of technology industry leaders from countries such as Japan and South Korea with US measures to limit the PRC's access to critical technologies as a national security risk.

The United States, Japan, and South Korea agreed in August 2023 at the trilateral Camp David summit to cooperate on the regulation of sensitive technologies to ensure their safe application, including by coordinating export controls.[49] Japan announced earlier in March 2023 a raft of export restrictions on semiconductor manufacturing equipment with the stated objective of preventing its application for military use.[50] Japan's former Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) Yasutoshi Nishimura denied speculation that the measures were aimed at the PRC specifically and downplayed the notion that Japan's actions followed the United States' lead.[51] Japan expanded export restrictions on semiconductor technology on April 26, which METI again stated was to better regulate the export of components with potential military applications.[52] The Biden administration announced further restrictions on technology imports from the PRC on May 15, including semiconductor and electric vehicles.[53]

Kishida separately raised concerns with Li in a bilateral meeting a day earlier over the PRC's “intensifying military activity” in the South China Sea and East China Sea, noting the PRC's military cooperation with Russia in the region. Kishida also stated that Japan was closely monitoring the PRC's military activities around Taiwan and stressed the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.[54] Kishida asked Li for the PRC to immediately lift a ban on the import of Japanese seafood products, which the PRC banned on health grounds after Japan released treated wastewater from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific Ocean.[55] The PRC's withholding of certain trade concessions acts as a lever to discourage Japan from taking further steps that the PRC regards as harmful to its national security.

Southeast

Asia

### *Cambodia*

**The PRC and Cambodia held annual joint “Golden Dragon” naval exercises in the Gulf of Thailand from May 16-30.** The PRC and Cambodia have held the exercises annually six times since 2016. PRC state media stated that the exercises focused on joint counterterrorism and humanitarian rescue.[56] 16 ships participated in the exercises, including 5 People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) ships, marking a record number of PRC military ships operating in Cambodian waters.[57] The joint

naval exercises follow recent high-level meetings between PRC and Cambodian officials. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet on April 24, where the two agreed to strengthen bilateral defense cooperation and continue conducting joint military exercises.[58]

The PLAN has maintained a near-uninterrupted presence at Cambodia's Ream Naval Base since December.[59] Cambodian Ministry of Defense spokesperson Chhum Soheat stated on May 8 that two corvettes were stationed in Ream during the last six months and were there to participate in the Golden Dragon exercises.[60] The *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2019 that the PRC and Cambodia signed an agreement that granted the PRC access to the base for thirty years, citing US officials who had seen a draft of the document.[61] Cambodian officials have consistently denied that the PRC has privileged access to Ream Naval Base, which would violate Cambodia's constitution.[62] The PRC MFA previously denied the PRC's involvement with the base and used the opportunity to criticize the US for its large overseas military presence.[63]

The PRC funded an expansion of Ream Naval Base in 2022 that accommodates larger ships to dock there.[64] The PRC has also funded a series of other big-ticket infrastructure projects in Cambodia, including two airports, and accounts for 40% of Cambodia's external debt.[65]

## Europe

**Two employees of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade office will go to trial on espionage charges in the United Kingdom.** PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesman Wang Wenbin accused the United Kingdom on May 24 of fabricating charges under the guise of national security in response.[66] Chung Biu Yuen and Chi Leung Peter Wai are charged with undertaking information gathering and surveillance to assist a foreign intelligence service in the period of December 2023–May 2024.[67] Thames Valley Police found the third man charged in the case, former Royal Marine Matthew Trickett, dead in Grenfell Park, Maidenhead, on May 21. A police investigation into his death is ongoing.[68]

## Russia-Ukraine

## War

**The PRC and Brazil announced six points of consensus to de-escalate the Russia-Ukraine War that are similar to the PRC's 2023 proposal.** The PRC's 2023 plan called for the cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians and nuclear power plants, avoiding using chemical or biological or

nuclear weapons, stopping sanctions, vague calls to respect national sovereignty, and “prevent[ing] bloc confrontation.”<sup>[69]</sup> The Sino-Brazilian 2024 plan called for the cessation of hostilities at a peace conference recognized by both Russia and Ukraine, protection of civilians and nuclear power plants, avoiding using chemical or biological or nuclear weapons, and opposition to dividing the world into “close political or economic groups.”<sup>[70]</sup>

Middle

East

The PRC held the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) in Beijing on May 30.<sup>[71]</sup> The heads of state from Bahrain, Egypt, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates attended the forum.<sup>[72]</sup> PRC Vice Foreign Minister Deng Li stated on May 27 that the objectives of the CASCF included promoting cooperation in “various fields” via the Belt and Road Initiative.<sup>[73]</sup> The \$2 billion sale of bonds by the Beijing-based Lenovo Group to the Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund on May 28 combined with the PRC-based FAW Group aiming to manufacture electric vehicles in Egypt demonstrates that economic cooperation will be a central component of the CASCF.<sup>[74]</sup> The states adopted the Beijing Declaration and China-Arab States Cooperation Forum 2024–2026 Implementation Action Plan at the forum, which aims to deepen cooperation in areas such as finance, aerospace, and artificial intelligence.<sup>[75]</sup>

PRC Vice Foreign Minister Deng Li and PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi reiterated the PRC’s position on May 27 and May 30, respectively, on the Israel– Hamas War calling for an immediate ceasefire and creation of an independent Palestinian state.<sup>[76]</sup> The joint Sino-Arab statement on Palestine issued at the forum echoes this view.<sup>[77]</sup> The PRC has repeatedly criticized Israel’s military operations in Gaza and US support for Israel while calling for an internationally mediated ceasefire.<sup>[78]</sup> The PRC’s Palestine policy position combined with the hosting of talks between Fatah and Hamas in late April reflects the PRC’s intent to play an active diplomatic role in the resolution of the Israel– Hamas War and the broader Israeli-Palestinian conflict.<sup>[79]</sup>

Guatemala

**The PRC rejected imports of Guatemalan coffee and macadamia nuts to punish Guatemala for maintaining diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan).**

The Guatemalan Exporters Association reported on May 23 that seven containers of macadamia nuts could not enter the PRC. *Reuters* stated unspecified Guatemalan traders had been told macadamia and coffee would be denied entry to the PRC.<sup>[80]</sup> Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo stated on May 24 that this trade issue could be related to Guatemala holding diplomatic relations with Taiwan.<sup>[81]</sup> PRC MFA Spokesman Wang Wenbin criticized Guatemalan Foreign Minister Carlos Martínez for

attending ROC President Lai Ching-te's inauguration on May 20. Wang also criticized Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo for holding a videoconference with President Lai on May 21.<sup>[82]</sup>

Guatemala sought to engage in trade with the PRC while also maintaining formal diplomatic relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan).<sup>[83]</sup> Guatemalan President Bernardo Arévalo stated on February 8 that he does not intend to switch diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the PRC.<sup>[84]</sup> PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Wang Wenbin's February 6 statement that Guatemala would need to recognize the one-China principle to "conduct cooperation" between the two countries underscores the difficulty Arévalo will face holding that position.<sup>[85]</sup> The one-China principle is the People's Republic of China's position that it is the sole legitimate representative of China and that Taiwan is a part of China. Guatemala accepting the PRC's one-China principle would mean breaking its diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

The PRC accounts for 2.66 percent of total Guatemalan exports, which suggests that the PRC rejecting coffee and macadamia nuts will not have a substantial impact on the Guatemalan economy.<sup>[86]</sup> The PRC policy to deny imports of Guatemalan coffee and macadamia nuts is a signal to President Arévalo of the costs to continued diplomatic relations with the ROC, however. The PRC is aiming to make it difficult for Arévalo to pursue both trade with the PRC and maintain diplomatic relations with the ROC.

The PRC's long-term objective is for Guatemala to switch diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the PRC. Guatemala and Belize are the only countries in Central America that recognize the Republic of China. The other five Central American countries broke relations with the Republic of China between 2007 and 2023. Guatemala and Belize are also 2 of the 12 countries, including Vatican City, that recognize the ROC.

| Central American Country | Date of Diplomatic Relations with the PRC |
|--------------------------|---|
| Costa Rica               | June 7, 2007 <sup>87</sup>                |
| Panama                   | June 12, 2017 <sup>88</sup>               |
| El Salvador              | August 21, 2018 <sup>89</sup>             |
| Nicaragua                | December 9, 2021 <sup>90</sup>            |
| Honduras                 | March 26, 2023 <sup>91</sup>              |

The CCP's efforts to diplomatically isolate the ROC are part of a campaign to degrade the ROC's legitimacy on the international stage. The loss of full diplomatic relations for the ROC supports the CCP's attempts to increase pressure on Taiwan to unify with the PRC without prompting an international backlash. Undermining international recognition of the ROC buttresses the CCP's argument that the ROC is not a state, but rather a province of the PRC.



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