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CHINA- TAIWAN RELATIONS

TAIWAN GAINS GROUND INTERNATIONALLY, BUT WILL CHINA RETALIATE?

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At the end of 2021, Taiwan and President Tsai Ing-wen stand in as strong a position as they have enjoyed in years. Taiwan has parlayed its opening of a representative office in Lithuania and Beijing's sanctions against Lithuania into public support from other European nations. For the first time Taiwan was invited to a US multilateral event, President Biden's Democracy Summit. On Dec. 18 Tsai unexpectedly defeated four opposition Kuomintang (KMT)-sponsored referendums that would have reversed a series of her executive actions as president, one of which would have obstructed her efforts to move forward on a bilateral trade agreement with the US. These victories effectively gave the Tsai administration a mid-term vote of confidence and embarrassed newly elected KMT Chairman Eric Chu Lilun. Chinese President Xi Jinping used the anniversary of the 1911 Xinhai revolution to underscore that reunification of Taiwan with the mainland would be the measure of the Communist Party's success in rejuvenating China. Repeated Chinese air sorties into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) made clear China's willingness to employ coercive tactics short of war to advance its aims. The combination of Taiwan's successes and China's determination to subjugate Taiwan may presage a contentious cross-Strait 2022.

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Agenda Setting by All Sides

China, Taiwan, and the United States all used high-profile anniversaries and meetings over the past four months to define their visions for the cross-Strait relationship in ways that advanced their domestic and cross-Strait agendas and sharpened tensions.

Reunification would fulfill China's historical mission

On Oct. 9, Xi Jinping celebrated the 110th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution. Xi's remarks [depicted](#) the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the sole and faithful heir of the vision of Sun Yat-sen, who led the revolution and established the Republic of China (ROC). Central to Sun's vision, Xi insisted, was the unification of China. Therefore, the reunification of Taiwan with China is central to China achieving Xi's goal of rejuvenation and avoiding chaos. This statement raised reunification from being merely a policy goal of the Chinese government to the definition of China's inevitable historical greatness.

A month later, on Nov. 11, the CCP [released](#) with great fanfare its third history of the Party, highlighting the central importance of Xi Jinping. This new resolution on Party history proclaimed that “[r]esolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Party.” While both Xi's Xinhai anniversary remarks and the new history were dramatic in tone, neither announced changes in policy or an accelerated timeline for reunification. In both statements, discussion of Taiwan remained near the end, its standard place in major speeches and Party and government work reports, signaling that the Party sees no reason to raise the profile of this issue above other challenges it faces.

In his yearend press conference, China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Ma Xiaoguang [offered](#) a sober forecast for 2022: “cross-Strait relations will be complicated and severe, and the situation in the Taiwan Strait will face a new round of tension.”

Taiwan seeks to lead as a democratic beacon

In her speech celebrating the national day of the Republic of China on Oct. 10, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen [offered](#) a very different vision. She

too warned that cross-Strait relations face “a situation that is more complex and fluid than at any other point in the past 72 years” but blamed that directly on Chinese threats. She did not mention the Xinhai revolution, which the ROC national day commemorates. Instead, she said that she is the president of the ROC as it has existed since Chiang Kai-shek arrived in Taiwan, clearly implying that this is something different from the ROC that previously existed on the mainland. She pledged to lead this ROC in accordance with the will of the Taiwanese people and without subordinating it to the People's Republic of China.

A few days before her national day speech, Tsai [authored](#) an article in *Foreign Affairs*, which described the threats facing Taiwan as important to the future of the global order, asserting that Taiwan is on the front lines of “the fight for democracy” and “a force for good in the world.” She warned that “Beijing is replacing its commitment to a peaceful resolution [of cross-Strait differences] with an increasingly aggressive posture.” She promised that “[d]espite being kept out in the cold” because China blocks its access to international organizations and bilateral diplomatic relations, Taiwan would strive to cooperate in international efforts to combat challenges such as climate change and the global pandemic.

The US leans toward Taiwan

Taiwan continued to be a major source of tensions in US-China relations. In anticipation of a virtual meeting between Presidents Joseph Biden and Xi Jinping, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken [assured](#) Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Nov. 12 that the US honors its commitments to cross-Strait peace and stability but is concerned about Chinese military, diplomatic, and economic pressure on Taiwan. Wang [countered](#) that “Taiwan independence” is the biggest threat to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and that the US should stop sending “wrong signals” to Taiwan.

After Biden and Xi met on Nov. 16, both sides released the customary readouts. The US [noted](#) that Biden expressed US opposition to “any unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait”; the Chinese side [highlighted](#) that the US said it does not support “Taiwan independence” and hopes that the Taiwan Strait region will remain peaceful and stable. During a press

briefing after the meeting, a senior US official [acknowledged](#) that Biden has expressed longstanding US opposition to Taiwan independence. This awkward balance between concern about what either side might do to change the status quo and admitting the risk of Taiwan independence suggests that the US was seeking to caution China, but it was unwilling to walk back earlier assurances to Beijing on Taiwan, perhaps hoping that repeating US formulations might enable the US and China to shelve their differences on this issue and address more soluble bilateral challenges.

US choices stall efforts to moderate tensions

US efforts to slow the apparently inexorable ratcheting up of US-China rhetorical tensions over Taiwan were hindered by an unscripted remark, a UN anniversary, and the US democracy summit.

The unscripted remark came during a town hall with President Biden on CNN on Oct. 21, when host Anderson Cooper [asked](#): “So, are you saying that the United States would come to Taiwan’s defense if China attacked?” and the president responded, “Yes, we have a commitment to do that.” The White House later insisted that the president had done no more than note the US commitment under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act to support Taiwan’s self-defense, but his response was generally understood to reflect the instinctive US reaction that it ought to back Taiwan in its confrontation with China.

Oct. 25 marked the 50th anniversary of UN resolution 2758, which in 1971 installed the People’s Republic of China as the lawful representative of China in the UN and its associated organizations in lieu of the ROC. China used the anniversary to proclaim once again that resolution 2758 means that the PRC represents Taiwan in the UN as a part of China in accordance with the “One-China principle.” The State Department [issued](#) a statement in the name of Secretary Blinken concluding that “Taiwan’s exclusion undermines the important work of the UN and its related bodies ... we encourage all UN Member States to join us in supporting Taiwan’s robust, meaningful participation throughout the UN system and in the international community, consistent with our ‘one China’ policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances.” Blinken’s statement provided the strongest US

official endorsement ever of Taiwan’s efforts to participate in international organizations.



Figure 1 Taiwan's Digital Minister Audrey Tang attends the Dec. 9-10, 2021 Summit for Democracy. Photo: South China Morning Post

The last of this trio of hindrances was President Biden’s virtual Democracy Summit on Dec. 9-10. In late November, the White House announced that Taiwan would be included, and Taiwan’s Foreign Ministry announced that Taiwan would be represented by Bi-khim Hsiao, the Representative heading the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in Washington, and Audrey Tang, Taiwan’s digital minister, who has led Taiwan’s defense against China’s cyber intrusions and social media manipulation. The US thought it had threaded the needle of showing support for Taiwan’s democracy without inviting President Tsai, which would violate its commitment to China to avoid high-level official contacts with Taiwan. China made it clear it was not persuaded, though its protests were more restrained than they would have been if Taiwan’s president, vice president, or foreign minister had participated even virtually. Tang’s presentation presented Taiwan as a completely open society, like Mongolia, Japan, and South Korea. To emphasize her point, she showed a PowerPoint map with these four democracies in green. China was shown in red, indicating it is a closed society. When this map appeared, the video feed for Tang’s presentation disappeared. The White House apologized and said that this was a technical glitch, but Taiwan supporters speculated the US was trying to honor its “one China” policy by not showing a map that could be seen as treating China and Taiwan as two different countries. Once again, Taiwan and its supporters were left to wonder whether the US was attempting a half-hearted gesture to China at Taiwan’s expense.

Taiwan Wins Support in Asia ...

The PRC's increasing military intimidation of Taiwan has compelled a slew of nations to publicly express concern about possible Chinese military action against Taiwan. Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio, dovish toward China as foreign minister (2012-17), [said](#) in September that Washington and Tokyo should conduct joint military simulations for a Taiwan scenario. Former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, still an influential voice in the ruling party, suggested that an attack on a US naval vessel responding to a Taiwan scenario "could be a situation posing a threat to Japan's survival, which would allow the exercise of collective self-defense." The PRC Foreign Ministry summoned the Japanese ambassador in Beijing to protest Abe's "dangerous" remarks that "interfere in China's internal affairs." Likewise, Australian Defense Minister Peter Dutton [said](#) that the "price of inaction" on Taiwan would be greater than the alternative.

... While Making Inroads in Europe

At the December meeting of the regular US European Union Dialogue, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and European External Action Service Secretary General Stefano Sannino "[expressed strong concern](#)" over "China's problematic and unilateral actions" in the Taiwan Strait that "have a direct impact on the security and prosperity of both the United States and European Union." In October, the EU Parliament issued its first-ever report on EU-Taiwan relations, which calls for an across-the-board upgrade in ties and a bilateral investment agreement. Europe's appetite for an investment agreement is likely driven by Europe's need for advanced semiconductor chips amid the global shortage and the dominant position of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) in that market. The new German governing coalition in late November issued its policy blueprint, endorsing Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations, a notable departure from Merkelian caution concerning Taiwan.

Taipei has sought to press the advantage this favorable environment presents. On Oct. 29, Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu made an unprecedented visit to Brussels to confer with European parliamentarians from nine member states. A week later, President Tsai welcomed the European Parliament's first official delegation to Taipei, where delegation head Raphael

Glucksmann declared "it is high time for the European Union to step up its cooperation with Taiwan."



Figure 1 Appointed Representative Eric Huang and colleagues in front of the plaque of the newly established Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania. Source: MOFA Taiwan

On Nov. 18, Lithuania allowed a *Taiwanese* Representative Office to open in its capital. Beijing declared that substituting "Taiwanese" for "Taipei," which had been used for unofficial representative offices elsewhere, was indicative of official relations. Beijing reacted harshly and downgraded relations with Vilnius to the *chargé d'affaires* level and ordered all Lithuanian diplomats in China to turn in their diplomatic identification. Vilnius evacuated its diplomatic staff from China in mid-December as it sought clarity over Beijing's intentions. EU Commission president Ursula von der Leyen declared that neither Taiwan's office in Lithuania nor its name constitute a "breach" of the EU's "one China" policy. Josep Borrell, the Commission's foreign and security policy chief, issued a [statement](#) in December that said the EU is monitoring coercive economic measures against Lithuania by China and may launch WTO proceedings. Because Beijing has limited economic ties with Lithuania, it [pressured](#) German auto parts giant Continental to remove Lithuanian inputs from its supply chain, and the German business federation in the Baltics [expressed worries](#) that its members may be compelled to close factories in Lithuania. The EU Commission has supported Lithuania during its spat with China, but its rhetorical support has not proved fully reassuring to Vilnius as China ramps up the pressure. Since late October, the PRC's coercive behavior against Lithuania has stoked a backlash within the EU, and this could redound to Taiwan's benefit.

China Retaliates

A month after staging a rigged presidential election, the Nicaraguan government switched diplomatic ties to Beijing in December, which reduced Taiwan's number of diplomatic allies to 14. Probably not coincidentally, the PRC announced the change while Taiwan was participating in the US Summit for Democracy. Before flipping Nicaragua, Chinese efforts appeared to focus on neighboring Honduras where leading presidential candidate Xiomara Castro pledged to recognize Beijing if elected. However, a week prior to the November election, US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Brian Nichols traveled to Tegucigalpa where he met with Castro and made clear Washington's desire for Honduras to maintain official ties with Taipei. Following Castro's decisive electoral victory, a top aide said the new government would maintain relations with Taiwan, acknowledging "nobody in the party wants to enter government distancing ourselves from the United States," but a China vs US/Taiwan bidding war over Honduras appears inevitable.

Beijing and Taipei Apply to Join CPTPP

Taiwan had been laying the groundwork for entry into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) over the past several years, but China submitted its own application first, on Sept. 16. Taken by surprise, Taipei expedited its own application and sent it in just six days later, hoping to diversify its economic relations away from China and deepen its integration into regional trade. Japan, by far the largest CPTPP economy, has already expressed strong support for Taiwan's bid, but China [has made clear](#) its opposition. Since CPTPP rules require an application to be approved by consensus, and China may lean on one of China's diplomatic and trade partners in the region to stall Taiwan's bid. Alternately, Japan or another current member could negotiate a paired entry as happened with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the World Trade Organization.

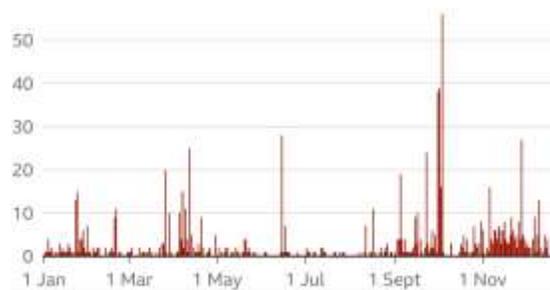
Military Confrontation Grows

Throughout the last four months of 2021, the pace of Chinese military air incursions into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) on the east side of the Taiwan Strait midline

became a near-daily occurrence. Taiwan's Minister of National Defense Chiu Kuo-cheng estimated on Dec. 22 that the Chinese had launched nearly 1,000 air incursions in 2021. The most intensive series of incursions [occurred](#) in early October around China's national day on Oct. 1, with 150 incursions reported over the first five days of the month. Although Defense Minister Chiu insisted to Taiwan's Legislative Yuan (LY) that Taiwan's military was capable of responding to China's incursions, the increasing numbers of sorties and the increasing proportion of combat aircraft suggest that China continues to use the flights both to intimidate Taiwan and to train for military action against the island.

Reported incursions into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone

Chinese military aircraft sorties reported by Taiwan in 2021



Source: Taiwan Ministry of National Defence

BBC

Figure 3 PLA incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ between January 2021 and November 2021. Photo: Taiwan Ministry of National Defence

US naval ships continued to conduct Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPS) in the Taiwan Strait, and Taiwan's Defense Ministry reported that US and allied aircraft carriers had [conducted exercises](#) near Taiwan in early October.

On Nov. 23, Taiwan's Legislative Yuan [approved](#) a \$8.66 billion special appropriation to purchase weapons produced domestically over the next five years. In the course of presenting this budget proposal to the LY, Defense Minister Chiu [offered his estimate](#) that China's military was already capable of invading Taiwan and would likely have the ability to blockade the Taiwan Strait by 2025. Taiwan also [announced](#) that it would establish a new command to manage expanded training for its reserve forces.

Both Taiwan and the US issued major military reports warning of China's growing capability to conduct military actions against Taiwan. Taiwan's report laid out plans to increase the capacity of Taiwan's reserve forces, often

identified as a key weakness since Taiwan ended conscription and went to an all-volunteer military. While Minister of Defense Chiu [insisted](#) in a letter to *The Wall Street Journal* that Taiwan was developing an effective asymmetric defense capability, many US analysts [expressed](#) concerns that Taiwan is still spending scarce resources to acquire large platforms that could easily be knocked out in the early stages of a conflict.

The US Defense Department report on PRC Military and Security Developments [warns](#) that the ongoing modernization and reform of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is designed to "provide Beijing with more credible military options in a Taiwan contingency ... develop[e] the capabilities to counter the US military in the Indo-Pacific region, and compel Taiwan's leadership to the negotiation table on Beijing's terms" (p. 36). Assistant Secretary of Defense Ely Ratner [gave](#) the US Senate a strategic rationale for US concerns, noting that "Taiwan is located at a critical node within the first island chain ... critical to the defense of vital US interests," seeming to suggest that Taiwan might be too important to see it become part of China, even if that were part of the "peaceful resolution" the US has long endorsed.

Rumors continued to surface in the Taiwan and US press that US military personnel were stationed in Taiwan. Beijing has insisted that such a presence, together with US provision of equipment and training in support for Taiwan's defense efforts proves that the US is violating its own "one China" policy and the commitment it made in recognizing the PRC in 1979 that it would withdraw its military from Taiwan. Minister of Defense Chiu [said](#) that the Taiwan and US military cooperate closely, but that does not constitute the stationing of US military forces on the island. In an interview with *CNN* on Oct. 28, Tsai [acknowledged](#) that US forces were in Taiwan training with Taiwanese military. Although many called Tsai's words an unforced policy misstep, it is also possible that it was a calculated move to reassure Taiwanese that the US and Taiwan governments were actively cooperating to secure Taiwan.

Cross-Strait Relations Become Partisan

On Sept. 25, Eric Chu Lilun was elected chairman of the opposition Nationalist (KMT) party, a post he held before losing the 2016 presidential election, which saw President Tsai elected to her first term. He succeeds Johnny Chiang Chi-chen,

who proposed to the 2020 KMT party congress that the party move away from its adherence to the "1992 Consensus," widely disliked by younger voters because the PRC has conflated the 1992 Consensus with its "One-China principle," which asserts that Beijing is the central government of all China and that Taiwan is merely a local authority. Chiang's initiative was defeated, largely due to the opposition of older party members, and Chu won election as KMT chairman promising that the party would continue to support the 1992 Consensus.

In the immediate aftermath of his election, Chu [received](#) a letter of congratulations from Xi Jinping, writing as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party. Xi recalled that the CCP and the KMT have worked together in the past on the basis of the 1992 Consensus and opposed Taiwan independence. He called the current cross-Strait situation complex and perilous and urged that the two parties work together for national reunification and rejuvenation. Chu then sent a response to Xi criticizing President Tsai and her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as anti-China and expressing the hope that the KMT and CCP can cooperate on the basis of the 1992 Consensus to secure cross-Strait peace and stability. Reactions to the exchange fell out along predictable partisan lines. Was Chu fawning before a leader who is Taiwan's greatest threat, or was he showing statesmanship and restraint to deal with Taiwan's greatest challenge? The Chu/Xi exchange may have laid out the central issue the KMT and the DPP will dispute in the 2024 presidential elections.

Lost in the furor over the letter exchange was another major announcement by Eric Chu, that the KMT [will open](#) a representative office in Washington, DC to explain the party's policies and introduce its leaders. The KMT briefly opened such an office after Chen Shui-bian became president but closed it after Ma Ying-jeou became president in 2008.

Was It All about Pork?

The first challenge facing Eric Chu upon his election was whether and how fully to support four referendums that had been either orchestrated or supported by the KMT under his predecessor. Chu chose to fight aggressively for all four as a vote of no confidence in President Tsai and her DPP government. The referendums sought to require Tsai's government to reverse

four signature policies. They would have required her: to restart the mothballed fourth nuclear power plant, halt construction of a natural gas import pier near environmentally sensitive reefs, hold future referendums in conjunction with otherwise scheduled elections, and close Taiwan's markets to US pork imports containing ractopamine. This last referendum, thought the most likely to pass, would have undermined her effort to secure a US bilateral trade agreement and Japanese support for Taiwan's application to join the CPTPP. When the polls closed on Dec. 18, all four referendum measures had failed. Chu apologized to party supporters, and Tsai quietly thanked voters for their vote of confidence in her government's efforts.

At the end of 2021, Tsai found herself riding a string of successes. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused less suffering in Taiwan than almost any place in the world, and Tsai's government has been lauded for its success. Taiwan is receiving more widespread and vocal international support than perhaps at any time since 1979. Taiwan's efforts over many years to expand its network of unofficial diplomatic relationships has had one of its most prominent victories in Lithuania, aided in no small part by China's harsh and overweening retaliation against Lithuania and its supporters in the EU. Even China's military intimidation and diplomatic intimidation have played to Taiwan's advantage, at least for the moment, justifying military budget increases and reform efforts as well as more overt security support from the US. Finally, in a referendum vote Tsai would clearly have preferred to avoid, she won a vote of confidence and stands stronger midway through her second term than any Taiwan president at this point in their tenure. None of this can be welcome news for leaders in Beijing.

Looking Ahead

As 2022 opens, Beijing will seek to counter Tsai and Taiwan's successes by increasing the coercive pressures and intimidation against Taiwan. Chinese military activities across the Strait will likely increase in tempo and scale. China will continue to try to persuade additional countries to break formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Now that Nicaragua has flipped, many expect Honduras, the Vatican, and perhaps others to follow. China will increase pressure on companies to distance themselves from Taiwan and from Lithuania. Will this Chinese intimidation damage popular morale in Taiwan

or increase popular antipathy toward the mainland?

Finally, as the Chinese Communist Party Congress prepares to anoint Xi Jinping for his third term as Chinese president and Communist Party general secretary in late 2022, Xi may choose to increase pressure on Taiwan to prove his power, or he may moderate confrontation to provide the stability so often prized in the year leading up to a Party Congress. How will this conjunction of political events affect Taiwan as the DPP and KMT head toward local elections next November and position themselves for the presidential election campaign that will begin immediately afterwards?

CHRONOLOGY OF CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER 2021

Sept. 1, 2021: Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) annual report to the Legislative Yuan on the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) warns that China's combat effectiveness is a growing threat to Taiwan's air defense, sea control, and counter-warfare systems and poses a huge threat to the country's military.

Sept. 6, 2021: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson says that backing US leadership is "the only way forward" to address Taiwan Strait challenges.

Sept. 7, 2021: Japanese Defense Minister Kishi Nobuo tells *Mainichi Shimbun* that, since Taiwan is an important ally and is geographically close by, Japan cannot stand aside when events occur in Taiwan.

Sept. 10, 2021: Taiwan's National Security Council Secretary General Wellington Koo and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu attend the regular US-Taiwan Monterey Talks, which discuss military plans and acquisitions.

Sept. 16, 2021: China formally [applies](#) to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement on Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) the day after the groundbreaking Australia-United Kingdom-United States defense alliance (AUKUS) was announced.

Sept. 16, 2021: Taiwan's Executive Yuan approves a special budget of NT\$240 billion (about \$8.6 billion) to procure domestically produced missile systems, air defense systems, and high-efficiency ships over the next five years. The procurement is expected to include the Hsiung Sheng cruise missile system, which has a range of about 600 km and can reach military targets in mainland China.

Sept. 16, 2021: In a joint statement at the conclusion of their annual AUSMIN meeting, foreign and defense ministers of the US and Australia [emphasize](#) that Taiwan plays an important role in the Indo-Pacific region and that they will strengthen relations with Taiwan and support its international participation. They also call for peaceful resolution of cross-strait disputes.

Sept. 16, 2021: European Parliament adopts a resolution urging the EU to negotiate a bilateral investment agreement (BIA) with Taiwan. The Parliament also calls for "concrete proposals and action" by the European Commission to facilitate Taiwan's full participation as an observer in United Nations agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Sept. 16, 2021: Czech Republic hosts a meeting under the Global Cooperation and Training Framework (GCTF), a Taiwan-US-Japan platform for like-minded partners. The event takes place at the Czech Senate and is opened by Senate President Milos Vystrcil, who led an 89-member delegation to Taiwan in 2020.

Sept. 17, 2021: US Navy missile destroyer *USS Barry* conducts a "routine" transit through the Taiwan Strait on the same day. It is the ninth time a US military vessel transited the strait since President Biden took office in January.

Sept. 22, 2021: Taiwan formally [applies](#) to join the CPTPP as "the Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu," the same name it uses in the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Sept. 26, 2021: Xi Jinping congratulates Eric Chu on his election as KMT chairman and welcoming the KMT's commitment to the 1992 Consensus. Chu responds, attacking President Tsai Ing-wen's Democratic Progressive Party for destabilizing cross-strait relations and assuring Xi of the KMT's commitment to the 1992 Consensus. Chu also [announces](#) plans to reopen a representative office in Washington D.C.

Oct. 1, 2021: Council of Agriculture (COA) Minister Chen Chi-chung [announces](#) that Taiwan plans to appeal China's ban on the import of wax apples and custard apples from Taiwan to the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. China claimed it repeatedly detected *Planococcus minor*—an insect pest—on sugar-apple and java apple from Taiwan since the beginning of 2021.

Oct. 4, 2021: Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense [states](#) that from Oct. 1-4, PLA aircraft intruded Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) 149 times. The incursion of 56 military aircraft on Oct. 4 was the highest number ever in a single day.

Oct. 6, 2021: AIT Taipei Director Sandra Oudkirk [assures](#) Taiwan's Minister of Economic Affairs Wang Mei-hua that the US government request for chipmakers, including Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC), to submit data on chip inventory and sales records is not targeting Taiwan but is intended to understand the root causes of the global chip shortage.

Oct. 7, 2021: *Wall Street Journal* [quotes](#) an unnamed US official on Oct. 7 saying that more than 20 US special operations and marine contingent personnel have been secretly stationed in Taiwan for at least a year to assist in training Taiwan's land and sea forces to strengthen Taiwan's defense capabilities.

Oct. 9, 2021: At a ceremony honoring the 110th anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution, CCP General Secretary Xi emphasizes that Beijing will adhere to the basic principles of peaceful unification and “one country, two systems,” as well as the “One-China” principle and “1992 Consensus,” to promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

Oct. 10, 2021: In her National Day address, President Tsai [proposes](#) cross-strait dialogue be based on four commitments, including that the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China are not subordinate to each other.

Oct. 12, 2021: *Harvard Crimson* student newspaper [reports](#) that the school will move its summer Chinese learning program from Beijing to Taipei starting 2022.

Oct. 22, 2021: Rick Waters, deputy assistant secretary of state for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia, [tells](#) a seminar hosted by the German Marshall Foundation that China is “misusing” UN Resolution No. 2758 of the United Nations to block Taiwan's participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Health Assembly.

Oct. 24, 2021: Italy's *Corriere della Sera* [reports](#) that China is putting pressure on the Vatican to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan and establish diplomatic ties with the PRC.

Oct. 25, 2021: Taiwanese delegation visiting Europe signs five memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Czech officials to bolster ties in the cyber security, space, catalyst technology, green energy, and smart machinery fields.

Oct. 27, 2021: President Tsai [confirms](#) the presence of US military trainers in Taiwan during a CNN interview.

Oct. 27, 2021: EU officials [acknowledge](#) that Taiwan Foreign Minister Joseph Wu will meet EU officials during a visit to Brussels.

Nov. 2, 2021: Taiwanese-American Michelle Wu [is elected](#) mayor of Boston, the first mayor of that city who is not a white male.

Nov. 2, 2021: Taiwan's MoD [announces](#) that starting in 2022, educational mobilization of reserved military men will increase to 14 days per year and that shooting training and combat training will both be increased.

Nov. 3, 2021: Delegation representing the EU Parliament Committee on Foreign Interference in Democratic Processes [arrives](#) in Taiwan, the first time that the European Parliament has sent an official delegation to Taiwan.

Nov. 3, 2021: US Department of Defense releases 2021 China Military Power Report assessing that the mainland is rapidly promoting military modernization with a goal of being able to compete with the US military in the Indo-Pacific region by 2027 and forcing Taiwan's leaders to negotiate on terms set by Beijing.

Nov. 8, 2021: Six-member Congressional delegation led by Sen. John Cornyn arrives in Taipei on a US Navy C-40 plane.

Nov. 10, 2021: Dalai Lama [says](#) that he wants to avoid getting involved in the “complicated politics” between Taiwan and mainland China, implying he is not planning to visit Taiwan.

Nov. 12, 2021: EU [postpones](#) a confidential plan to upgrade its trade ties with Taiwan, in a sign of internal uncertainty over how to balance ties with Taipei and Beijing.

Nov. 15, 2021: Taiwan Economic Minister Wang Mei-hua announces that Taiwan investments in “New Southbound” countries reached US\$5.35 billion in the first eight months of 2021, an increase of nearly 200% compared to the same period last year

Nov. 16, 2021: President Biden tells President Xi during their virtual summit that the US opposes any unilateral change in the cross-Strait status quo, according to a White House readout. White House officials subsequently confirm a Chinese readout that Biden said the US opposes Taiwan independence, noting that is a longstanding US position.

Nov. 16, 2021: President Biden [says](#) of Taiwan: “It’s independent. It makes its own decisions.” White House officials later insist that the president was not changing US policy.

Nov. 17, 2021: Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman meets Korean and Japanese deputy foreign ministers. Among other topics, they [express](#) shared concern about peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Nov. 18, 2021: Taiwan’s Air Force inaugurates the first squadron of 141 F-16A/B aircraft that had been converted to F-16V BLK20.

Nov. 18, 2021: “Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania” officially opens. This is the first representative office in Europe that uses the name “Taiwanese.”

Nov. 22, 2021: Subsidiaries of Taiwan’s Far Eastern Group in Shanghai and four provinces [are punished](#) over violations ranging from environmental protection to staff and fire safety rules. Analysts infer that the conglomerate is being sanctioned for election contributions to Taiwan officials on Beijing’s “separatist” blacklist.

Nov. 23, 2021: Legislative Yuan passes a special budget for procuring naval and air combat capabilities, set for a total of NT\$237.3 billion (about US\$8. billion). The most expensive item is the shore-based anti-submarine missile system project, which costs NT\$79.7 billion (about US\$2.8 billion).

Nov. 23, 2021: US Pacific Fleet announces that the *Arleigh Burke*-class guided-missile destroyer USS *Milius* (DDG 69) passed through the Taiwan Strait.

Nov. 26, 2021: Tsai meets with US Congressional delegation led by Rep. Mark Takano (D-California), chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, and announces that starting from January next year, Taiwan’s Veterans Affairs Council will open an office in Washington.

Dec. 1, 2021: Former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo states that Japan cannot tolerate a military invasion of Taiwan.

Dec. 1, 2021: Shanghai-Taipei City Forum debuts. Mayor Ko Wen-je of Taipei calls for both sides to promote meaningful dialogue.

Dec. 7, 2021: China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) [confirms](#) that it will repatriate the suspect in a deadly Nov. 22 shooting in New Taipei back to Taiwan from Xiamen. This comes less than a week after international nongovernmental organization Safeguard Defenders reported that about 610 Taiwanese nationals accused of crimes in other countries were extradited to China from 2016 to 2019.

Dec. 7, 2021: Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and Taiwan's Economic Affairs Minister Wang Mei-hua [announce](#) the

Technology Trade and Investment Collaboration (TTIC) dialogue framework.

Dec. 8, 2021: In Congressional [testimony](#) Assistant Secretary of Defense Ely Ratner positions Taiwan within the US Indo-Pacific defense posture in new and direct ways, calling the island a “critical node... anchoring a network of US allies and partners.”

Dec. 9, 2021: Nicaragua and the PRC [announce](#) they have established diplomatic relations and that Nicaragua has severed ties with Taiwan.

Dec. 10, 2021: Taiwan’s Digital Minister Audrey Tang briefs the US Summit for Democracy on Taiwan’s digital democracy. Her video is cut off momentarily while Tang is showing a map that marks Taiwan and China in different colors, contravening the US “one China” policy. The Department of State stated that the interruption of Tang’s video was unintentional.

Dec. 18, 2021: All four referendums supported by the Nationalist (KMT) party fail, including one that would have blocked President Tsai’s initiative to open Taiwan’s market to US pork with the additive ractopamine in an effort to jumpstart negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement.

