

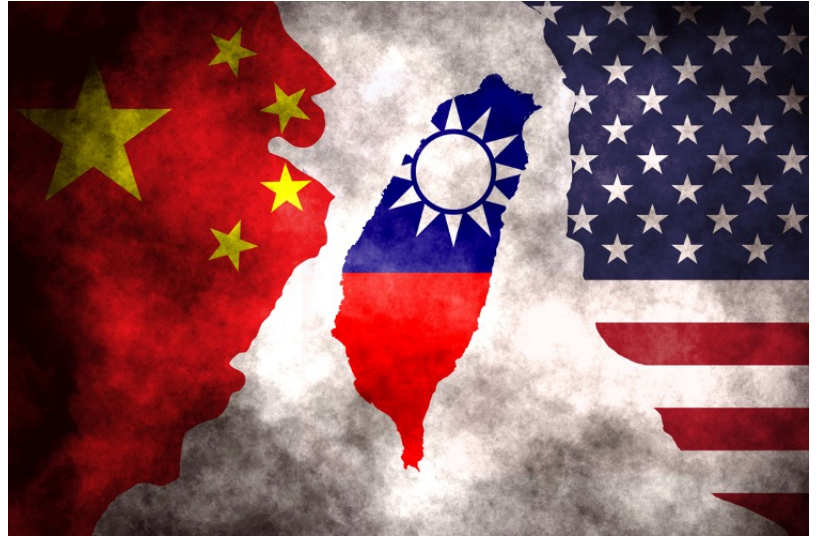


Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on November 30, 2023

## China Says Taiwan Independence Would Mean “War”

On November 27, Chinese government spokesperson Chen Binhua warned that while Beijing was willing to permit “plenty of space” for peaceful reunification with Taiwan, it will not tolerate separatist activities, in response to remarks made by Taiwanese pro-independence politicians ahead of a presidential election on the self-governing island.

According to media reports, Lai Ching-te and Hsiao Bi-khim, both from Taiwan’s ruling Democratic Progressive Party, recently stated that Taiwan continues to be threatened by an attack from the mainland.



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Lai, who positions himself as a “worker for Taiwanese independence,” is campaigning for office in January’s presidential election and has chosen Hsiao, a former envoy to the United States, as his running mate.

Chen, who is spokesperson for China’s State Council for Taiwan Affairs Office, said Beijing will not be lenient to those who promote separatism in Taiwan.

Moreover, the Chinese spokesperson cited Beijing’s Anti-secession Law of 2005, which stated that China sees Taiwan as an inalienable part of its territory. The legislation permits Beijing to employ arbitrary, non-peaceful means to achieve unification with the island, which has been self-governing since 1949.

“I want to emphasize that Taiwan independence means war,” Chen stated as he condemned Lai and Hsiao as separatists, castigating the pair for downplaying the risks of separatist activities to deceive voters before the 2024 election.

At a meeting with President Joe Biden in California earlier this month, Chinese President Xi Jinping cautioned that Taiwan potentially remains the most thorny issue in Sino-U.S. relations.

Under the Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act 2022, the U.S. government can spend up to \$2 billion a year in military grant assistance to the island from 2023 to 2027. Taiwan, for its part, has more than \$14 billion of U.S. military equipment on order.

A recent report by Japan-based Nikkei Asia revealed that Greece has warned its public officials not to attend events or ceremonies hosted by Taiwan to avert possible diplomatic clashes with its key trading partner, China.

While the European Union (EU) does not have formal ties with Taiwan or recognize Taipei’s claim to independence from Beijing, relations between Taiwan and the 27 member states of the European bloc are varied. Notably, Lithuania has been a prominent backer of Taiwan, and other countries, Estonia and Latvia included, have increased interactions with Taipei.

Greece, though, has maintained its distance, with the Nikkei Asia report claiming that in recent days,



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Athens has warned its officials not to attend any events hosted by Taiwan to avoid what its government said could be “serious problems” for Greece-China ties.

In an email distributed to diplomats in early October, Greece’s Foreign Ministry instructed officials to decline any invitations they may have received to attend events to mark Taiwan National Day on October 10, Nikkei Asia said.

“The participation of ministers, members of parliament and civil servants in receptions or events of the Representative Office must be avoided,” the email, signed by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexandra Papadopoulou, said, as per the publication.

The email elaborated that Greek representation at a Taiwanese Representative Office, often considered de-facto embassies, could be regarded by Beijing “as an indirect recognition of the independence of Taiwan” and could pose “serious problems” in ties between Greece and China.

Officials from EU states, including France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, attended events to mark Taiwan’s national day this year, Nikkei Asia pointed out.

China is a major trading partner for Greece and exported almost \$13 billion worth of goods to Athens in 2022, as per UN data. The same period saw Greek exports to China amounting to well over \$400 million.

The warning emailed by Greece’s Foreign Ministry to its various officials came about a month before the country’s prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, visited Beijing, where he met with Xi.

In their summit, both leaders discussed expanding cooperation on shipping and clean energy, boosting Chinese tourism to Greece, and increasing the number of Greek products that enter the Chinese market, a meeting summary from Beijing officials disclosed.

Previously this year, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen highlighted the EU’s commitment to the One-China policy, which formally recognizes Beijing as the “sole legal government of China.” However, in April, von der Leyen warned Xi against using force in the Taiwan Strait and said that Europe stands “strongly against any unilateral change for the status quo” in the region.

Earlier in November, Taiwanese National Security Council chief Wellington Koo told reporters in Taipei that he did not think that China’s Xi had the military means to stage a successful invasion of Taiwan within the next few years, meaning that Taiwan has more time to build up its defense capabilities.

“I don’t think it will happen in the near future or at least within one to two years,” “If China needs to carry out amphibious landing operations to take Taiwan, I don’t think it will have such capabilities by 2027,” Koo said.

His remarks reinforced an assessment last year by U.S. Army General [Mark Milley](#), then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who said Beijing would not be ready to forcibly reunify with Taiwan for “some time.” Milley claimed that China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) lacked the “experience” or “background” to successfully invade the self-governing island and had not yet trained for such an operation. At the time, he said Xi wanted the PLA to be ready to invade Taiwan by 2027.

This reported timeline would provide Taiwan more time to build up its military forces, Koo said. He elaborated that Taiwanese forces would use anti-ship missiles, U.S.-made HIMARS rocket systems, drones, and Javelin anti-tank weapons to batter PLA units.

Koo praised Washington for rushing to bolster Taiwan’s forces for a potential invasion by expediting



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arms deliveries and training troops. He said security cooperation with the United States covered “all aspects” of the island’s defenses. “I can only say, they are using all possible ways to help us — no matter if it’s in training or the buildup of asymmetric fighting capabilities.”

Tensions in the Taiwan Strait have escalated in recent years, with China vowing to reunify with Taiwan, by force if necessary. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) said in September that reunifying with Taiwan was “the inevitable requirement for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.”



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