

China-Taiwan Weekly Update, November 2, 2023

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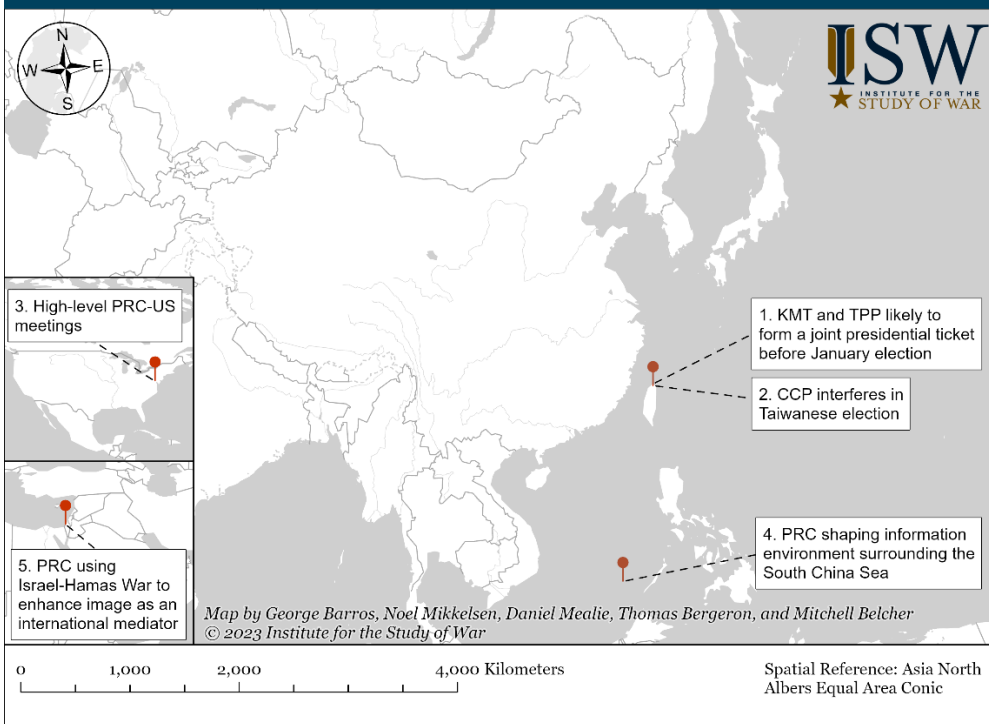
Data Cutoff: November 1 at 5pm ET

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and relevant cross–Taiwan Strait developments.

Key Takeaways

1. The Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) agreed to cooperation in the legislative elections and will likely form a joint presidential ticket before the January 13 presidential election.
2. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is interfering in the Taiwanese election in order to harm the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) chances of victory in the January 13 presidential and legislative elections.
3. High-level meetings between PRC and United States officials are unlikely to mitigate People’s Liberation Army (PLA) military coercion targeting Taiwan.
4. The PRC is shaping the information environment to blame the United States for potential future geopolitical incidents in the South China Sea.
5. The PRC is using the Israel-Hamas War to enhance its image as an international mediator in the Middle East.

China-Taiwan Update Political-Military Events (October 25, 2023 - November 1, 2023)



Taiwanese Presidential Election

The Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) agreed to cooperation in the legislative elections and will likely form a joint presidential ticket before the January 13 presidential election. TPP presidential candidate Ko Wen-je and KMT chairman Eric Chu agreed on October 30 to inter-party cooperation for the January 13 legislative elections.¹ KMT presidential candidate Hou Yu-ih previously stated on October 26 that there was no longer time to conduct a national primary or poll to determine the lead of a hypothetical joint KMT-TPP presidential ticket. Hou and Ko agreed that day to enter into party-to-party negotiations in the unspecified future to decide on whether to form a joint presidential ticket.² This rendered moot the prior sticking point between the parties on deciding whether to use a primary or poll to determine the composition of the presidential ticket. Ko, Hou, and Chu held an initial meeting to start the party-to-party negotiations on October 31.³ These meetings are tangible progress towards the forming of a joint ticket. The progress of future meetings will be the basis for future assessments. There is majority support among the KMT and TPP bases for a joint ticket, according to the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation.⁴ This further incentivizes the candidates to form a joint ticket.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is interfering in the Taiwanese election in order to harm the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) chances of victory in the January 13 presidential and legislative elections. The CCP interferes in the Taiwanese election to prevent DPP presidential candidate Lai Ching-te from winning and prevent the DPP from retaining its majority in the Legislative Yuan. The CPP views Lai and the DPP as “separatists” that threaten the status quo.⁵

DPP spokesperson Chang Chih-hao alleged that the CCP manipulated polls, used tax inspection and land survey investigations, forced Taiwanese businesspeople to express pro-PRC political positions, subsidized airfare for Taiwanese pro-China figures to return to Taiwan, and employed other forms of economic and military coercion to interfere in the election.⁶ “Tax inspections and land survey investigations” refer to the October 22 PRC probes into Foxconn, the company founded by independent presidential candidate Terry Gou.⁷ These probes create a financial incentive for Gou to comply with CCP objectives in order to placate the investigators. The PRC state media outlet *Global Times* criticized Terry Gou for being a spoiler candidate and dividing the anti-DPP opposition on multiple occasions. An October 22 *Global Times* article that disclosed the Foxconn probes reiterated this point about Gou and implicitly linked the probes to the election.⁸ The Republic of China’s (ROC) Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) also seized NT\$11.5 billion (US\$354.6 million) in illegal inward remittances and warned that unspecified foreign actors are using remote funding, internet betting, and cognitive warfare to influence the January 2024 presidential and legislative elections. The MJIB did not specify the origin of the illegal remittances but said it would increase monitoring of PRC nationals coming to Taiwan on the pretext of “social interaction.” The MJIB said unspecified organizations use offshore funding from remittances to make donations to political candidates via Taiwanese businesspeople.⁹

An unnamed Taiwanese “senior government official” said on October 29 that the Executive Yuan had established a task force to combat election disinformation by the PRC. The official said that the PRC has built a network within Taiwan’s religious communities and that disinformation proliferated through these communities.¹⁰ Members of Taiwanese Buddhist organizations like Fo Guang Shan and Mazu-worshipping organizations like the Taiwan Matsu Fellowship have met with officials from the PRC’s Taiwan Affairs Office and United Front Work Department at various cross-strait exchanges.¹¹

Sino-American Relations

High-level meetings between PRC and United States officials are unlikely to mitigate People’s Liberation Army (PLA) military coercion targeting Taiwan. PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken on October 26 and President Joe Biden on October 27.¹² *Reuters* reported on October 31 that the meetings led to an agreement in principle for Xi and Biden to meet in San Francisco in November.¹³ PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) spokesman Wang Wenbin stated on October 30 that the “road to San Francisco will not be a smooth journey,” indicating persisting friction points in Sino-American relations such as the United States’ regional military presence.¹⁴ Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission Zhang Youxia struck a similar tone on October 30 at the Xiangshan Forum on International Security when he accused the United States of “meddling in regional affairs.”¹⁵ He also declared the Chinese military would “never show mercy” to those who want to separate Taiwan from China.¹⁶ The meetings preceded unannounced October 31 PLA drills to Taiwan’s southeast by the Shandong aircraft carrier strike group.¹⁷ The Shandong’s deployment on October 26 and subsequent commencement of drills corresponded to spikes in Taiwan ADIZ violations by People’s Liberation Army Air Force aircraft.¹⁸ The PRC rhetoric in conjunction with the ongoing unannounced military drills indicates that high-level Sino-American diplomatic engagement will not translate to easing military pressure on Taiwan.

The PRC is shaping the information environment to blame the United States for potential future geopolitical incidents in the South China Sea. The PRC state-controlled China Global Television Network (CGTN) aired an October 29 interview with Lieutenant General He Lei accusing the United States of arrogantly interfering in the Sino-Philippines territorial disputes in the South China Sea.¹⁹ This echoes PRC MFA spokeswoman Mao Ning’s condemnation of United States “interference” in the South China Sea amidst Sino-Philippines territorial disputes.²⁰ Her comments occurred after the PRC Coast Guard rammed Philippine ships near the Second Thomas Shoal on October 22.²¹ This PRC aggression extends to a growing trend of People’s Liberation Army Air Force planes dangerously operating near United States aircraft in the East and South China Sea since 2021, according to images declassified by the United States Department of Defense.²² The China Military Power Report stated the United States has documented in excess of 180 such instances since 2021.²³ The CCP inaccurately placing blame on the United States for interfering in the South China Sea indicates that the party’s false rhetoric aims to provide cover for coercive People’s Liberation Army military activity. This activity aims to degrade the American-led security architecture.

Israel-Hamas War

The PRC is using the Israel-Hamas War to enhance its image as an international mediator in the Middle East. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and state propaganda outlets repeatedly condemned violence between Palestine and Israel since October 7 but never condemned Hamas.²⁴ The PRC Special Envoy for Middle East Affairs Zhai Jun emphasized the necessity of a two-state solution during an October 29 interview with the radio station Voice of Palestine. He stated that the root cause of the conflict was the lack of a Palestinian state.²⁵ Zhai also called for a ceasefire while meeting with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi on October 30.²⁶ This messaging indicates that the PRC supports the Palestinian cause in order to gain diplomatic influence among Middle Eastern countries sympathetic to Palestine.

The PRC’s messaging on the Israel-Hamas War also aims to enhance its status as leader of the Global South. The PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs and state-affiliated Global Times portrayed the PRC as listening to the Arab and Palestinian people in alleged contrast to the hypocritical United States on October 19.²⁷ This portrayal came after the United States vetoed an October 18 United Nations Security Council resolution on the war in the Middle East put forth by Brazil.²⁸ The CCP routinely frames the PRC as a developing country and says that Chinese-led institutions, such as BRICS, represent the Global South on the international stage.²⁹ The CCP’s call for a ceasefire and implementation of the two-state solution amidst the Israel-Hamas War supports the party’s messaging that it is the leader of the Global South.

¹ <https://focustaiwan dot tw/politics/202310300013>

² <https://www.storm dot mg/article/4889361>

³ <https://focustaiwan dot tw/politics/202310260008>

⁴ <https://www.cna dot com dot tw/news/aip/202310315003.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.tpod dot>

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⁵ http://www.gwytb dot gov dot cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202308/t20230813_12558748.htm

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- ⁷ <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300340.shtml>
- ⁸ <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1300340.shtml>
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- ⁹ <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2023/10/27/2003808285>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2023/10/29/2003808390>
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- ¹³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-aims-biden-xi-meeting-san-francisco-november-2023-10-31/>
- ¹⁴ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/202310/t20231030_11170661.shtml
- ¹⁵ <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/4F9tIEcIN9m>
- ¹⁶ <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/4F9tIEcIN9m>
- ¹⁷ [https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202311010010#:~:text=Dozens%20of%20PLA%20planes%20detected%20near%20Taiwan%20amid%20aircraft%20carrier%20drills,-11%2F01%2F2023&text=Taipei%2C%20Nov.%201%20\(CNA,in%20waters%20southeast%20of%20Taiwan.](https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/202311010010#:~:text=Dozens%20of%20PLA%20planes%20detected%20near%20Taiwan%20amid%20aircraft%20carrier%20drills,-11%2F01%2F2023&text=Taipei%2C%20Nov.%201%20(CNA,in%20waters%20southeast%20of%20Taiwan.)
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<https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3560482/sabrina-singh-deputy-pentagon-press-secretary-holds-a-press-briefing-with-assis/>
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- ²⁸ <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15450.doc.htm>
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