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民主進步黨
Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan

The KMT Calls It Neutrality. Beijing Calls It Useful.



March 9th, 2026

Cheng Li-wun's op-ed gives Beijing exactly what it asked for.

KMT Chair **Cheng Li-wun** published an op-ed in Foreign Affairs last week calling for "neutrality" and reiterating the so-called "1992 Consensus." Cheng argues that "Taiwan doesn't need to choose sides", a framing that, per the DPP's [official response](#), **obscures the real threat Taiwan faces**, echoing the CCP's preferred narrative and united front talking points.

"Not choosing sides" is a CCP narrative

Knowing that directly choosing China is deeply unpopular in Taiwan, the

CCP has long promoted this idea of "neutrality," aimed at shifting Taiwanese public opinion away from the United States. This obviously only serves CCP interests. Cheng's making this the centerpiece of her argument reveals her orientation.

Choosing Beijing in practice

Even taking her call to "not choose sides" at face value, Cheng's statements and actions since assuming the chairmanship have **consistently aligned with Beijing's interests**. Instead of confronting the CCP's ongoing **military coercion, diplomatic pressure, and influence operations** against Taiwan, the KMT under Cheng's leadership has **downplayed these realities** while leading efforts in the Legislative Yuan to **block or delay key legislation**, including measures related to **special defense procurement** and the **U.S.–Taiwan trade agenda**, whenever they run counter to Beijing's political objectives. In practice, this "neutrality" posture becomes a diversion that **shifts focus and prolongs delays** on legislation critical to Taiwan's national security and economy.

Blaming the victim

Cheng puts the blame for the current lack of dialogue squarely on the DPP's shoulder, claiming that "Taiwan's official actions and discourse have raised tensions unnecessarily." Most egregiously, she includes in this category "suspension of semiofficial communication mechanisms since 2016." For our part, we have been clear: the DPP governments of Presidents Tsai Ing-wen and Lai Ching-te have unceasingly called for dialogue. **At no point, in any way, has our government ever suspended communication.**

As Cheng knows well, this **suspension was unilaterally imposed by Xi Jinping** when Taiwanese voters refused to vote according to his preferences. No one in Beijing has dared revisit that decision in the ten years since. **Her preference for blaming the victim is consistent with CCP narratives**, in which tensions are always due to Taiwan, never to aggression from Beijing. The same logic holds by which CCP propagandists claim the war in Ukraine was started by NATO and not Russia, or that President Lai is a dictator. **These narratives share an author.**

Claiming "deterrence," while undermining Taiwan's defense

Cheng's article promotes a so-called "three-pillar deterrence," yet the KMT has repeatedly led efforts in the Legislative Yuan to **block or delay key bills**. Since her article was published, the **KMT has introduced a low-ball and unworkable defense special budget proposal** that would gut one of the most essential elements of deterrence: **defense self-reliance**. The Taiwanese public and our friends in the US deserve better than that.

Real peace cannot be built on the illusion of safety created by looking away from Beijing's coercion. Labeling Taiwan's self-defense as "provocation," and describing democratic cooperation as "choosing sides," only **provides a pretext for Beijing's threats and offers a rationale for weakening Taiwan's defenses.** If we want to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, the international community must strengthen its support for Taiwan's security, **not be directed to limit it and compromise with Beijing.** Genuine commitment to deterrence requires more than an op-ed.

The "1992 Consensus" is not a basis for security or dignity

Finally, Cheng once again claims the "1992 Consensus" should serve as the basis for cross-strait engagement. But the KMT's own shifting interpretations underscore the problem: The KMT's original interpretation of the so-called "1992 Consensus" was "one China, respective interpretations." At the 2015 Ma–Xi meeting, it was framed as "one China only, with no respective interpretations." In her reply to Xi Jinping's congratulatory message, Cheng formulated it as "respective interpretations within one China." Her newly appointed Vice Chair Hsiao Hsu-tsen has even proposed "one country, two areas," which openly drifts into the CCP's goal of "one country, two systems." **It bears emphasizing** that it is China, not the United States or Taiwan, that has repeatedly claimed Taiwan is an integral part of it. The United States has never made such a claim. Packaging political preconditions for Taiwan's absorption as a "foundation for dialogue" does not bring Taiwan dignity or security; it **hollows out Taiwan's sovereignty and democracy.** For our part, the DPP continues to call for cross-strait dialogue, without such preconditions, and under conditions of dignity and parity.

Taiwan's choice is clear

There is nothing neutral about treating freedom and absorption as equivalent options. A "choice" between belonging to the PRC and maintaining sovereignty is no choice at all. Taiwan has always stood for **freedom and the rule of law**, and its ultimate national interest is safeguarding sovereignty and protecting the rights of its people. We have one question for the KMT: between the democratic camp and the authoritarian camp, where does the KMT stand?

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Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan

**Taiwan's Government Responds:
KMT's Last-Minute Special Defense
Budget Proposal**



March 5th, 2026

The stakes? NTD 1.25 trillion in urgently needed defense investments.

In November, the government proposed a special defense budget totalling NTD 1.25 trillion (approx. US\$40 billion) to procure urgently needed weapons systems across eight years. After months of refusing to schedule a review, the Legislative Yuan finally set March 6th as the start date, alongside the smaller opposition TPP’s alternative proposal of NTD 400 billion (approx. US\$12.7 billion).

A day before the review, the KMT announced its own proposal at NTD 380 billion (approx. US\$12 billion)—**smaller even than its TPP coalition partners sought**. More to the point, the KMT proposal limits its first-stage special budget to only the eight items in the U.S. arms sale that Washington already notified Congress in December. **It funds no anticipated future procurement, no co-production, and no defense-industrial investment**. Basically, the KMT is proposing to legislate a congressional notification that has already happened, and call that a

special budget.

Presidential Office: Defense cannot be discounted

Presidential Office Spokesperson **Kuo Ya-hui** stressed that providing Taiwan's armed forces with the best equipment and ensuring national security is a **cross-party responsibility**, reiterating President Lai's message: "**Investing in defense is investing in peace.**" She warned that splitting and discounting the most urgent defense needs would **delay force-building** and place Taiwan's security under unnecessary risk.

MND: Why the KMT approach increases risk and delays capability delivery.

In a statement released today, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND) responded to the KMT caucus draft and highlighted four practical risks:

1) It slows timelines by "phasing" the special act, risking missed windows and lost production priority. The special budget is intended to concentrate resources to rapidly build high-readiness capabilities. A phased or conditional approach lengthens procedures and legislative timelines, which can translate into missed LOA signature windows and loss of production-line prioritization, directly undermining rapid force buildup.

2) It creates a mismatch with how U.S. cases actually get finalized, making "LOA as a precondition"-- a recipe for delay. An LOA signature is the beginning of negotiations, not the end. After signing, the U.S. still needs to negotiate with prime and subcontractors to finalize price, scope, schedule, and delivery. A legislative design that requires an LOA in hand before moving, while also locking in line-item amounts, **reduces Taiwan's ability to adjust to negotiation realities, raising execution risk and increasing the likelihood of delays and rework.**

3) It blurs budget categories without solving the underlying timeline risk. MND clarified that three items the KMT draft lists (**TTN/TAK**, **AH-1W** spare parts, and **Harpoon missile** repair/overhaul) are standard cases already funded through the annual government budget and not part of the Executive Yuan's special procurement act. Folding routine cases into a special act does not automatically accelerate LOA signature; it **risks diluting** the special budget's purpose, **complicating** oversight, and

instigating legislative contention rather than speeding execution.

4) It strips out spending categories that are also required, creating capability gaps. The KMT argues that commercial procurements (DCS) and domestic procurement should revert to normal budgets. MND's position is the opposite: the government's plan, developed over two years of professional assessments and coordination with the United States, integrates **FMS, commissioned domestic production, and commercial procurement** to meet the full range of urgent needs and sustain overall defense resilience. Carving out domestic and commercial channels risks **crowding out** regular annual budgets, **slowing** acquisitions, and **leaving gaps** in critical capabilities, including defense-industrial resilience and non-PRC supply chains.

The Bottom Line: The KMT's gating conditions and carve-outs would **delay capability delivery and increase execution risk** at exactly the moment Taiwan needs faster force-building. The DPP, in **collaboration with US counterparts**, is committed to fulfilling its goal: standing firmly behind an expertly-crafted **government proposal** that meets Taiwan's needs.

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