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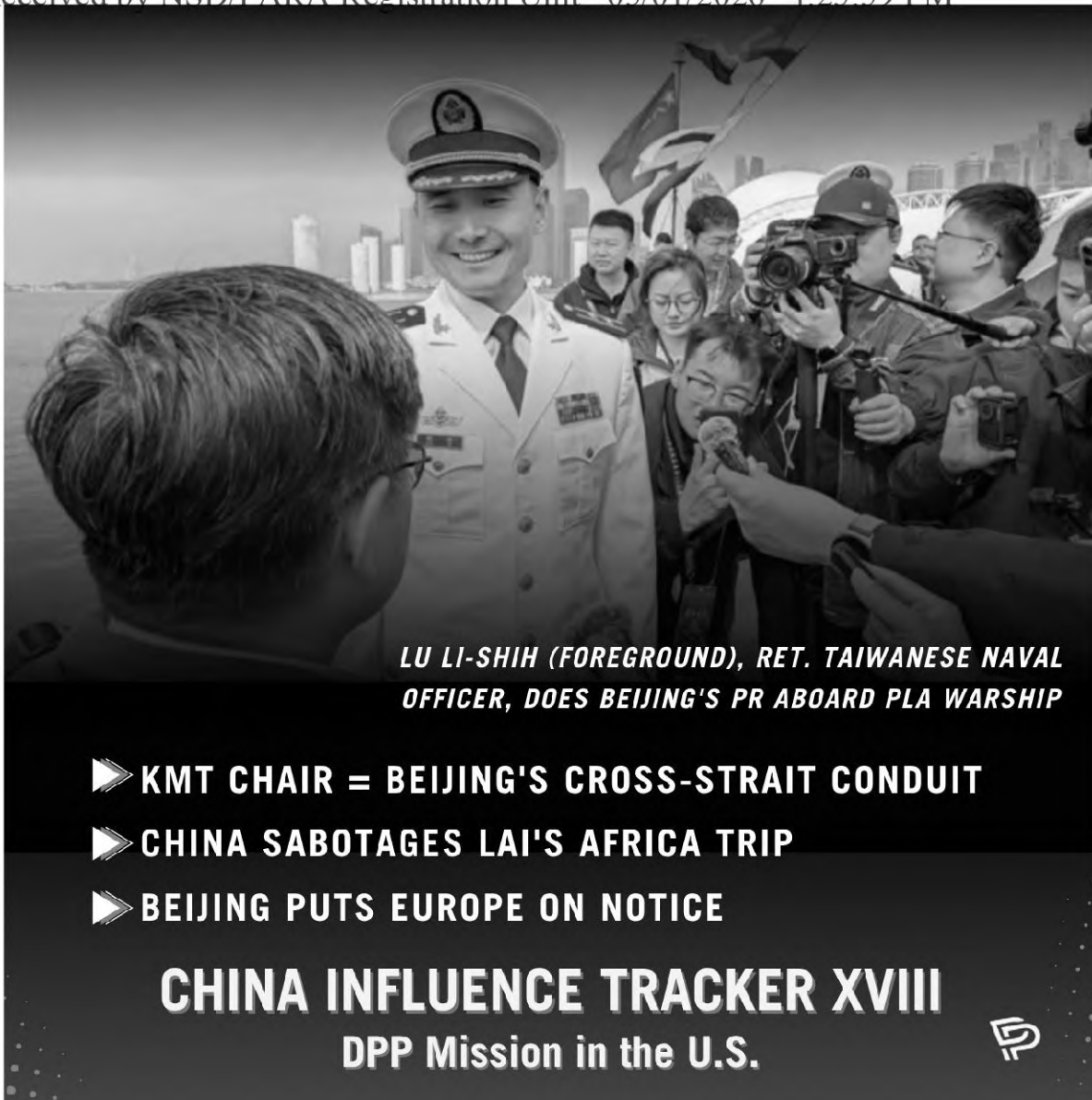


**民主進步黨**  
Democratic Progressive Party of Taiwan

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## **China Influence Tracker (XVIII)**

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*April 29h, 2026*

**Welcome back to the CIT** – let’s catch you up to speed. In April, Cheng Li-wun went to Beijing, accepted their political terms, and came home with a package of measures carefully calibrated to drive a wedge in Taiwanese-public opinion favoring the KMT-CCP platform for managing cross-strait relations.

***That was just the domestic play.*** President Lai’s aircraft never left the ground after African states pulled overflight permits hours before departure, a retired Taiwanese naval officer did Beijing’s public relations from the deck of a PLA warship, and seven European defense firms learned that selling weapons to Taiwan carries consequences in Beijing.

Here’s what happened.

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## April Toplines

- ***KMT Chair as Beijing's Cross-Strait Conduit:*** Cheng endorsed Beijing's version of "1992 Consensus" and came home with ten measures attaching civilian incentives to a KMT-CCP political pipeline. KMT mobilized Taiwan's Chamber of Commerce demanding government compliance within two weeks. The pressure didn't need to come from Beijing directly.
- ***China Sabotages Lai's Africa Trip:*** Hours before departure, Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar each pulled overflight permits for the presidential aircraft, citing the one-China principle. The episode illustrates China's Three Warfares in practice.
- ***Beijing Puts Europe on Notice:*** Seven European defense firms landed on China's export control list for arms cooperation with Taiwan, signaling that even indirect defense ties to Taiwan carry economic consequences under Beijing's framework.
- ***Beijing's Reach Inside Taiwan's Institutions:*** A legislative espionage case involving classified documents and CCP-linked media exposed penetration of Taiwan's political system. Election integrity concerns and legal gray zones around political participation signal expanding exposure to Chinese influence operations.

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### KMT Chair as Beijing's Cross-Strait Conduit

On April 7th, Cheng Li-wun traveled to China for what the KMT described as a "Peace Journey." Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) immediately cautioned that party-to-party exchanges should not come at the expense of sovereignty or be framed within a "one China" framework. The following day in Nanjing at Sun Yat-sen's mausoleum, Cheng framed cross-strait tensions through historical narratives of resistance to foreign invasion, including overt anti-Japanese sentiment, which MAC Deputy Minister Liang later described as closely aligned with CCP messaging. National Security Bureau Director-General Tsai Ming-yen also said that the CCP continues to pursue a strategy of "***pressure through both engagement and coercion.***"

On April 10th, Cheng met with Xi Jinping in Beijing, building on the messaging that emerged during her earlier public appearances in Nanjing. The discussions centered on four proposals progressing from identity to

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integration and grounded in the “1992 Consensus,” which Cheng reaffirmed as the “only political basis” for cross-strait dialogue. She also pointed to a potential return to a formal engagement framework if the KMT were to regain power in 2028. MAC officials described the proposals as consistent with a unification-oriented framework, rather than a neutral “peace framework.”

The ten measures followed on April 12th, covering direct flights, tourism, agricultural imports, and KMT-CCP youth exchanges, all framed as responding to Taiwanese livelihood concerns. While presented through economic and social channels, the package prioritized KMT-CCP communication mechanisms over trade or tourism, indicating the primary focus was institutional linkage rather than commercial exchange. By April 20th, Taiwan’s General Chamber of Commerce was holding a press conference demanding government compliance with Beijing’s agenda, its chairman insisting there had been no pressure from China, only pressure from Taiwan’s own government. The MAC had warned business associations not to allow themselves to become instruments of political pressure, and the press conference suggested that warning had not fully landed. Transportation data, however, undercut the underlying premise: Taiwan already operates 310 of 420 available weekly cross-strait flights, Taiwanese carriers use 55% of their allocated flight rights, and thirteen charter routes opened in 2023 have received zero applications from either side. ***The bottleneck was never Taiwan.***

### **Three Warfares Under the Microscope**

Beijing’s April pressure campaign tracked closely with its “Three Warfares” approach—legal, informational, and psychological tools operating in parallel. On April 17th, the JS Ikazuchi became the first Japanese warship to transit the Taiwan Strait under Prime Minister Takaichi. China’s Eastern Theater Command tracked the passage for over thirteen hours, called it a provocation, and issued a formal diplomatic protest through the Foreign Ministry. The response to a routine freedom of navigation transit underscored how aggressively ***Beijing is working to raise the cost of any allied presence in the strait.***

That pressure extended into the air. President Lai’s planned April 22nd visit to Eswatini never departed after Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar each revoked overflight permits for the presidential aircraft hours before takeoff, citing the “one China” principle. Presidential Office Secretary-

General Pan Men-an attributed the reversals to Chinese economic coercion, while MOFA accused Beijing of weaponizing flight information regions against civil aviation. The PRC Foreign Ministry, the same day, reiterated that a “president of the Republic of China (Taiwan)” does not exist.

Taiwan’s Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung ultimately arrived in Eswatini as a special envoy on April 25th and completed the mission regardless.

***Taiwan’s diplomatic engagements held.*** The airspace around them did not.

On April 24th, China’s Ministry of Commerce placed seven European defense entities on its export control list, citing arms sales to Taiwan. The list included Germany’s Hensoldt, Belgium’s Herstal Group, and Czechia’s Omnipol, restricting access to Chinese dual-use exports including rare earths. Defense Minister Wellington Koo said the measures would not affect Taiwan’s procurement, though Beijing’s signal was not aimed at Taipei alone. Europe has not supplied Taiwan with major weapons systems in decades, partly out of concern over Chinese retaliation, yet the sanctions were imposed regardless. The message to governments and firms weighing cooperation with Taiwan was clear.

A similar pattern appeared in Denmark, where residence permits for Taiwanese nationals have, since 2024, listed nationality as “China.” MOFA demanding correction and suspended privileges for Danish representative office staff in Taipei, while Beijing’s TAO responded that the one-China principle is a “universal consensus.” The MAC rejected that framing entirely, underscoring the political nature of the designation dispute. ***This case demonstrates the reach of Beijing’s administrative logic into third-party systems.***

### **Beijing’s Reach Inside Taiwan’s Institutions**

On April 8th, former legislative aide Chu Cheng-chi was indicted for obtaining and photographing classified Legislative Yuan documents and transmitting them to a CCP member later identified as the news director of Haixia Herald, a united front-linked outlet that had already been suspended from Taiwan operations since 2025. He received RMB20,000 for his trouble. The case reinforced long-standing assessments by Taiwan’s security services regarding CCP-linked media operating in Taiwan: ***editorial activity and intelligence collection are not always distinct functions.***

That assessment was echoed in remarks by newly appointed Central Election Commission Chair Michael You on April 27th, when he identified six institutional vulnerabilities, including AI-driven deepfake disinformation, absentee voting risks, and direct Chinese interference in electoral processes. He referenced the Li Chen-hsiu case and warned it would not be the last. The MAC moved in tandem, issuing a clarifying interpretation of Article 21 of the Act Governing Relations, requiring Chinese nationals to formally submit proof of loss of mainland household registration before the ten-year Taiwan residency clock begins. With local elections approaching at year's end, ***the interpretation closes a procedural gap that Beijing previously exploited.***

*April's Throughline?* This month's malign influence operations weren't escalatory for escalation's sake. The Xi-Cheng meeting set political preconditions, the ten measures converted them into domestic pressure, and elements within Taiwan's own business community did part of the work. Beijing ran every channel available this month, and the electoral calendar means the window for closing gaps is narrowing.

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*In collaboration with the DPP China Affairs Department, the latest DPP U.S. Mission report provides key updates on the evolving cross-strait situation, detailing the escalation of China's military intimidation, gray zone activities, cognitive warfare, and United Front infiltration targeting Taiwan. Enclosed are the recent developments, offering a comprehensive overview of the current threat landscape, Taiwan's countermeasures, and emerging public opinion trends shaping the strategic environment.*

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