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Beijing might be dishing out its best attempts to isolate Taiwan. However, democracies around the world are also realizing that reaching out to learn from the Taiwan experience might just be the key to combating Chinese influence.

Picture source: Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), [flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/presidentialoffice/34892686740/), <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/presidentialoffice/34892686740/>>; Press Service of the President of the Russian Federation, *President of Russia*, <<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/55001/photos>>.

China's Aggression toward Taiwan is Against Rule-based World Order

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Since President Tsai Ing-wen took office in 2016, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been insisting that she accept the so-called "1992 Consensus" and the One-China framework as a precondition for cross-strait dialogue. Since 2016, Beijing has consistently increased pressure on Taiwan domestically and around the globe

starting by preventing Taiwan from participating in international organizations. Internationally, since the beginning of 2018, China has adopted an even more aggressive stance in limiting Taiwan's political status and Taiwan's ability to participate and contribute in international organizations. China's existential threat toward





Taiwan seems to tilt in favor of the PRC. However, several countries around the world, including Taiwan's strongest ally, the United States, are recognizing China's continuous bullying of the vibrantly democratic nation and its people's freedom. China's hostile behavior toward Taiwan does little to contribute to the "world-leader" status China seeks to achieve and is in gross violation of the rule-based world order. Along with China's attempt to insert itself in other countries domestic politics to garner its own national interests by utilizing democratic procedures against themselves, it is only a matter of time, as we begin to observe, when democracies around the world will unite and develop strategies to combat China's corrosion of this world order.

In recent months, China has extended its tentacles of threats and oppression to private businesses from hotel chains, clothing stores to airline carriers and Taiwanese businesses abroad. In addition, Taiwanese entertainers who have projects in China were also pressured to declare themselves "Chinese," and say that they do not support Taiwan independence and swear allegiance to the "Ancestral Land."

Earlier this year, China's Civil Aviation Administration sent 36 letters to foreign airline carriers to demand changes to the airlines' websites that refer to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau as separate territories from the PRC. The PRC even gave the airline carriers a deadline to make the "correction" or there would be repercussions. Washington came out blasting China's behavior, calling it "Orwellian Nonsense." The Trump administration said that

the administration "will stand up for Americans resisting efforts by the Chinese Communist Party to impose Chinese political correctness on American enterprises and citizens." While other airline carriers caved in to Chinese pressure, Australia's former foreign minister, Julie Bishop, also warned Beijing against using threats to pressure Australia's national airline, Qantas, to adopt the Chinese Communist Party's political position referring to Taiwan as part of China. Ms. Bishop stated that "the terms that private companies choose to list destinations are a matter for them...there should be no pressure from governments, whether ours or others, that threatens the ordinary operations of business."

This January, the Chinese government shut down the Chinese website for Marriot International after discovering the website listed Taiwan and Tibet as separate countries from the PRC. Marriot Group quickly issued an apology, stating that the company "respects and supports Chinese sovereignty and its territorial integrity." US clothing company, Gap, also quickly apologized in a statement that says, "Gap Inc. respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China. We've learned a Gap brand T-shirt sold in some overseas markets mistakenly failed to reflect the correct map of China. We sincerely apologize for this unintentional error." Last month, Taiwanese netizens disclosed that the booking system of Four Points by Sheraton Taipei listed Taiwan as "Taiwan, China," sparking outrage among Taiwanese. Sheraton then severed its contract with Marriot Group and stated that it would not accept Marriot Group's booking system. Popular coffee chain, 85 Degrees, became the latest victim of Chinese



intensification to bully Taiwanese into submission. After a short stop by President Tsai Ing-wen in its store in California to purchase coffee for herself and members of her delegation, the Taiwan-founded coffee chain's app was wiped from Chinese delivery apps' platform. Its stores in China were then raided by health inspectors, and its investors sold shares in its parent company, Gourmet Master, which plummeted 9.8% in trading. To weather the anger, 85 Degrees posted a statement on the Chinese microblog Weibo, first, thanking the Chinese government for its assistance and directives, then pledging support for the so-called "1992 Consensus" and lastly, stating the firm's strong opposition to any action that separates people on both sides of the Strait. As recent as this week, news reports in Taiwan have indicated that Chinese embassies contacted travel agencies in Taiwan's target New Southbound Policy countries to instruct them to warn Taiwanese living in those countries to not return to Taiwan to participate in the Republic of China national day activities, otherwise, a future visa to enter China might be compromised.

What Beijing has not realized, or has wrongly convinced itself into believing otherwise, is that in order to become a great power and leader in world politics, winning the hearts and minds of countries around the world is also key. Similar to its attempt to unify with Taiwan is also an endeavor to capture the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people. Coercive, threatening and unreasonable behavior will only incite resistance. After China's latest poaching of Taiwan's diplomatic ally, El Salvador, President Tsai Ing-wen said in her public statement that

"We[Taiwan] will turn to countries with similar values to fight together against China's increasing out-of-control international behavior." In the past, China has benefited from democracies' complacency, distractions due to other conflicts and the lack of knowledge among democratic government officials and members of societies on the intentions of the CCP. However, by behaving in an aggressive, pompous and threatening manner, China has created the incentives for democracies that are threatened by this behavior to reach out to one another to develop strategies to combat such encroachment. After El Salvador and Taiwan severed diplomatic relations, the US State Department's spokesperson commented that the United States is "deeply disappointed" with El Salvador's decision, and that the United States is "reviewing" its relationship with El Salvador following this decision. China also created the space for Taiwan to contribute to the development of such a strategy, as Taiwan has been under all aspects of China's threats for decades.

Beijing might be dishing out its best attempts to isolate Taiwan. However, democracies around the world are also realizing that reaching out to learn from the Taiwan experience might just be the key to combating Chinese influence. In return, Taiwan now has the perfect opportunity to engage and contribute its experience and assist in protecting our rule-based world order with values and standards.

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Editor's Note: The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the Prospect Foundation.

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